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CHIP,

THE CAVE-CHILD.

BY MRS. MARY A DENISON,  
AUTHOR OF DIME NOVEL No. 505, "RUTH MARGERIE."

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CHILD,

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STANDARD SCHOOL SERIES

THE CAVE-CHILD.

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# CHIP,

## THE CAVE-CHILD.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE GRAVE — THE TAVERN KITCHEN.

“Ow! P! Chip, I say! come here, Chip!”

An Indian woman, tall and gray, sat on a wooded height in the midst of a narrow clearing. The grand hills inclosing one of the most enchanting valley spots in Pennsylvania, rose abruptly on every side, crowned to the summit with lofty trees. It was a wild, high solitude, untrodden by the foot of enterprise. The moss had crept up the trunks of the old oaks whose years had seen generations pass away, and here and there the red berries of the mountain-ash gleamed jewel-like through a more somber foliage. Peak after peak, with clouds sailing grandly, like great ships, freighted with dew, down their green channels, the mountains lifted their brows bare to the sun.

Oh! what a glorious sight it was, to one standing there far above the level of common life, watching the crimsoned day departing. But not of this thought the wild, haggish woman who, out of rude materials, and with ruder implements, was carving what appeared to be a head-stone for a little grave. The clearing, with the exception of a narrow path opening down the hill to the westward, was heavily inclosed with oaks and maples. To the right was the mouth of a cave, thick set with scraggy bushes, whose rocky projections, covered with moss and furze, struck sharply out from the surrounding greenness. The woman was a picture in herself. She had an Indian face, furrowed with grief or passion. Her cheeks were hollow, giving an unnatural prominence to the bones under the eyes. Startlingly black, the iris of her eye seemed sometime swimming in fire, for the ball was crossed with red streaks. Her long, ebon locks were partly gathered up, partly falling upon her broad, gaunt shoulders. Her forehead was high, narrow, and seamed with many lines; her lips wore a fierceness in their compressed muscles that seemed ever ready to spring out and fasten upon an enemy; and just now she seemed to have fallen into a tigerish mood peculiar to her whenever overcome by any strong emotion. Her dress was of some dark and stiff texture, very scant, badly made, and not very cleanly. Her complexion was the tawny, olive-cast of an Indian.



"Chip! Chip, I say!" she cried again, suspending her work and bending toward the opening of the cave; "come here, child — better come quick."

By this time, a child, with a face of unearthly whiteness, bleached by the absence of sun and light, appeared at the aperture. Her neck was of such tenuity that it looked like a reed, and her little hands and arms were thin and almost unnaturally long. Her yellow hair was so extremely fine and free from moisture, that it hung about her like spray goldened by the sun. Energy, expression, life itself seemed void in her diminutive face. She looked like a bulb dug up from the earth before it has put out a single shoot of vitality. Her large, lack luster eyes floated loosely in wide, hollow sockets, and her fine brows beautifully curved, lifted uneasily as the imperious voice of the old woman ceased.

"Come here and see what I'm making," said the latter, harshly, and the child drew near; "do you see? it's a tombstone."

"A tombstone," repeated the child, mechanically; not with the eagerness of inquiry.

"Yes, a tombstone; and you poor little fool, if you could read, you'd see your own name upon it — Chip Nobody, aged eleven."

The child gave a most unchildish sigh, and looked steadily at the old woman, though the look was that of a somnambulist dreaming of unreal things.

"Now," said the old woman, garrulously, "I'm going to make believe you are dead and buried. I'm going to put you in that hole, see;" and she pointed to a cavity she had made, which was the receptacle of a queer-looking bag filled with bones; "now, that's you," she added, with a wild laugh — "remember, you're dead and gone to dust, and now I shall cover you up. There!" she exclaimed, stamping upon the little mound with a gesture almost of fury, "I've put it over you — put the mold of an accursed race upon your bones, and there you will lie; and he shall see it and howl, while you will be worse than dead." Then, changing her manner, she said, assuming a look of fear, "There, are the flaming eyes! run, Chip, run!"

Before the words were scarcely uttered, the child fled with a shriek of terror that echoed among the hill-tops, and the old woman, with a mocking laugh, bent down to place the headstone over the apparent grave. This done, she glanced about uneasily, muttering, "The storm is coming; the breath of the evening is warm close to the ground — the sky is copper-colored where the sun is going down, the swallows fly in among the tops of the trees in the valley — the white moon is in a ring; it will rain, hail, blow, and destroy. I will set out on my journey, or this young one will starve." So saying, she stooped down to the aperture, entered, drew the bushes close, and disappeared.

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A great pitch-pine fire roared upon the hearth, making the shadows on the walls dance with a wild, jubilant motion. It was an old



tim' tavern kitchen, the counterparts of which are seldom met with, save in some of the back settlements of Pennsylvania. All its smoky timbers and gigantic beams blushed a tawny red, illuminated by the cheery fire; and the faces of sundry travelers seated around the great hearth-stone glowed in the rich light. Most of the men were farmers and teamsters from the neighboring towns on their way home; their countenances were indicative of cheerful tempers, but gross feeding and low intellectuality. Before them stood a small round table, plentifully garnished with mugs of home-brewed beer, and flanked by a clayey-brown pitcher nearly empty. Without, the gusty wind ran shivering through the trees, hurtling itself against the small-paned casements, catching at shutters, and puffing occasionally down the broad mouthed chimney, sending curling clouds of smoke before it. Now it moaned like an old man who sinks in the waters, struggling no longer; now its shrieks were shriller than the eagle's cry, and anon it sobbed like an infant in a troubled dream. It rained dismally, as it had rained all day, and the comfort-loving occupants of the old kitchen hugged themselves with pleasure as they thought of food, warmth, and their security from the tempest. The room was very long and low, and the gleam of the fire, intercepted by the shaggy backwoodsmen, did not reach the entire range, consequently the back part was in dim obscurity; but had one peered closely through the darkness, he would have seen the form of a boy, crouched in a low seat, and drowsing, for his head rested on his folded arms that he had gathered about his knees; he seemed coaxing himself to be warm and comfortable.

"Well, I s'pose we shall have to be making tracks here, putty soon," said a long, lank personage, whose attitude resembled that of an interrogation point, and as he spoke he ran his fingers through a shock of yellow hair. "As for me," he continued, "I be durned hungry — bean't you, Jeemes?"

"Certain I am," responded a thick-set man with watery eyes and a nose hooked like the beak of a parrot. "I've rid a matter of thirty miles since twal, and my innards rattle like a dice box. Now, boys, stir your stumps, for here comes Masty, short and crusty as ever, I'll be boun'."

A door opened in the center of the kitchen wall, admitting a dumpy figure with heavy, scarlet arms, bare to the elbow. A huge tea-kettle swung from one broad hand, and from the other dangled an old fashioned toasting-fork. Going directly up toward the curled figure of the boy, she touched him lightly with her foot, exclaiming, "Here, stupid, time you was stirring — laying about here; these men wants their supper, and so, for that matter, do I myself. Go lay on the cloth and the dishes, an be spry about it, or mind your ears'll sting for 't."

"Hi! Masty, you shall have a husband when you're married, my smart girl," said a stout teamster, lighting his blackened pipe, and gazing at her with something of admiration through the smoke that followed his efforts.



‘ I’ll be thankful then if I don’t get such a loon as you,’ responded the girl, saucily, jerking the heavy kettle to the center of the crane, the water spouting out and sending little jets of steam in her face.

“ Whoa ! ” cried the teamster, “ the bit chafes ”

“ Does it ? ” replied Mastina, innocently, turning about, “ let me see your tongue, and if it’s blistered, I’ll put a plaster on it.”

“ Ho, ho, ha ha ! ” rang out from the coarse company. The teamster’s face grew red, and he took his pipe angrily from his mouth, when the parrot-nose struck him on the knee, saying, “ Look here, man, save your wit; she’s one too many for you; you’ll get worsted if you try it with Masty’s here; we’ve all given her up, long ago; she’s got the vocabulary, as the parson says, on her tongue’s end; so hush, man — take your lashing quietly.”

Meanwhile, Masty worked away, raking the glowing coals to the center of the hearth, heaping them to the great ash-log. “ Here, Nick,” she cried to the boy, who was busy at the table, “ bring me the split bread out of the pantry.”

The boy came hurrying along with a heaping trayful. Mastina inserted one of the thick wheaten slices in the aperture of the fork saying, as she turned away —

“ Here, you man that got *bit* so badly, see that toast doesn’t brown too much,” and giving him a laughing, roguish glance out of her bright eyes, she left the circle, saying, “ now I’ve given you a *bit* of my tongue, I’ll give you another kind of tongue for supper, something that’ll be *neater*.”

Again the men laughed out, and Mastina, flew now in, now out of the circle at the fire, her ready wit showering on all sides, her stout, short arms flashing about like the crimson wings of an industrious flamingo. The table was soon set with substantial fare, and Nick had gone back to his old position. At the ringing of the bell for supper, two persons came from the little parlor — a young, slender youth, and a gaunt, pale Quaker fellow-traveler, yet strangers to each other. The latter had his long locks combed smoothly behind his ears, where they rested on the straight collar of his Quaker coat. If nobility of character, integrity of heart, and great resolution combined with a singular simplicity that was almost childlike, were ever delineated by one feature of the human face divine, they were mapped out by the broad, yet not prominent brow of the Quaker preacher. He was in reality an embodiment of his profession, plain, stern, quiet — yet his gravity was tempered with a sweet smile, and his voice was exceedingly beautiful.

Still fell the rain in torrents, and blew the wind with a tempest violent, but, just as the travelers had seated themselves at the table, there came a lull, and a soft, sweet sound like a lute, or a rich organ-note, was distinctly heard outside the old inn. The men looked at one another, and Mastina, with whom the sound appeared familiar, laughed a little, exclaiming —

“ She’s out earlier than usual to-night.”



"What does she mean?" asked the stripling, curiously, of an old farmer who sat near him.

"Why, the cave-child," replied the parrot-nose, helping himself enormously to dipped toast; "you see there's a mighty thick woods about two miles from here, mayhap you saw it coming along."

"Yes, I remember, a dismal-looking, swampy place it seemed to be, too, filled with scraggy undergrowth," replied the other, thoughtfully. "And wasn't it there, or coming from that direction we saw that tall dark woman?" he queried, turning to the Quaker.

"Yes, my friend," replied the preacher.

"Oh! did you see old Mother Kurstegan?" asked Mastina, pausing in the act of filling a cup with coffee; "then, bad luck, she'll be here to-night, begging; I wish she'd keep away."

"Ay, but we'll have rare fun with her though — she'll tell all our fortunes, and give us plenty to think about for the next six months," exclaimed the teamster.

"Does thee think that any but God can know the future, young man?" asked the Quaker, sternly."

The farmer stared, open mouthed, at this rebuke, but said nothing. The youth who had before spoken, pondered upon the mystery that had been hinted at by the man with the parrot-nose. He was of that age when romance throws its weird spell over the imagination, when trees have tongues as well as brooks and stones, and every emerald bank of every running river is peopled with fairy-folk. With strange elfish intelligence in his eyes, the parish castaway, Nick, as he sat in his accustomed place, looked up between his hands, a singular smile lighting his handsome but neglected face, whenever Mother Kurstegan was mentioned — and then, after a low chuckle, he seemed to sleep again.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE STRANGER — HIS INTERVIEW WITH NICK.

"But what do they mean by the cave-child?" asked the young man, Park Dinsmore, turning to the Quaker preacher.

"It is my opinion that they know not themselves," replied the Quaker; "a child was stolen ten years ago from the city of Philadelphia, and died they say, among these hills; some report that this Indian woman hath made way with her."

"Yes," said a stout Pennsylvania teamster, prefacing his speech with a nasal "hem," "you see in this county there's a powerful lot of wild land and Methodists. Just two miles south of this there's a big swamp extending over a big lot of country, running, I think it is, jest two miles."

"I've heard of running water, but I never heard of a running swamp," put in Mastina, gravely.



"Oh! you jest hush, gal, I reckon I kin tell my own story," replied the teamster.

"We all knew you're a story teller," retorted the girl, "that's the reason people find it so hard to believe what you say — but don't mind my jerking you off. What did the swamp do after running its two miles?"

While the farmers were laughing at this sally, and at the disconcerted looks of the teamster, a cold, damp wind swept through the room, and the cheery voice of the little landlord was heard vociferating,

"Walk in, sir, walk right in; an awful night, yes, *that* you may say, sir — warm fire here, though, first-rate accommodations for man, not to say beast," cried the fat little landlord, rubbing his hands as he ushered in a tall, splendid figure wrapped in a heavy cloak; and with a great deal more noise and pomp than was agreeable to his plainer guests, and a great deal more parade than was acceptable to the stranger, he placed a chair by the blazing hearth, and then dodged about him, rubbing his hands and bobbing his little bullet-head as he enumerated the delicacies and comforts of his hostelry.

"Have any thing you'll be pleased to call for, sir — chicken, ham, tongue, salmon — there is pickled eels, there is corn beef — there is — Mastina, my good girl, what is there we *havn't* got?" he asked, turning pompously, still rubbing his hands, toward the full table.

"We havn't any boiled baby, sir," replied the girl readily, causing a tittering from one end of the table to the other.

"What!" exclaimed the landlord, his little red eyes protruding, while the stranger, as he turned his head suddenly to see from whence came this quick reply, displayed a smile on a dark, singular face, irregular in feature, but still eminently handsome when not in repose.

"You asked me what we *didn't* have in the house, and I couldn't think of any thing *but* a boiled baby, as we've got most every thing else," replied Mastina, demurely.

"He, he, put to her wits you see, house is so full; every thing *but* boiled baby — he, he. Have supper here, sir, or in a private room — warmer here, sir — take some time to get the chill off — can set you a separate table just here by the fire, sir."

"That will do," replied the stranger, in a low tone — "look here landlord, have a good fire prepared, and my chamber well heated, for I shall want to retire soon; these chilling August storms coming before their time have given me an effectual shake," and he drew his cloak closer and shivered.

"Of course you'll have something *hot* right off," said the obsequious little landlord — "Nick, mix some hot brandy and water for this gentleman."

"No, no, if you please; I never drink brandy; give me a little ginger in some hot water — that will do."



“You hear the gentleman, Nick;” as the boy turned to go, the stranger bent an inquiring gaze upon him.

“A poor-house boy, sir — took him out of Williamspert poor-house — a peart little fellow — when I lost my negro Sam; but since then, sir, I think he’s a little gin out — don’t seem so smart and handy — thinks too much — sets still like a stick or stone, mostly — a strange young ’un, sir.”

The traveler said nothing, but with a keen, almost painful’y fixed glance, eyed the meagerly clad child now coming toward him with a little tray and a steam-covered tumbler. The boy was thin, and his clothes merely hung together. His complexion was dark, his features regular, with a softness of outline that blended well with the wavy, uncurled hair that hung over his gray eyes. He bore the stranger’s glance with composure, even returned it with equal interest, and then fell back from the fire, as if it were an unaccustomed or forbidden indulgence to warm his poor limbs by such grateful embers. Meanwhile, the stranger drank leisurely, pressing his pale lips together after he had drained the tumbler, and knitting his brows as if lost in painful reflection; and Nick receiving orders to make a fire in the large chamber, walked slowly away with the tray and empty tumbler. When the farmers and hearty yeomen had finished their supper, they drew up again to the fire, this time making a wide circle. For some moments, restraint, caused by the new presence, kept them silent, and the stranger’s eyes, after scanning quickly the sun-browned faces, lingered with a longer glance upon the fair young face of Park Dinsmore, finding that refinement in countenance, and grace in bearing, that made him wonder how he became mixed in with the rest. The Quaker preacher, not finding the company congenial, had gone to his own room.

Mastina, who was not a servant but a half sister of the landlord, quickly replaced the well-cleared table with finer linen and better fare, then drawing forward a seat she beckoned the stranger to partake, and poured out the tea, scanning his face with good-natured assurance.

“Now, I reckon you’ll tell that story about the cave-child,” exclaimed one of the yeomen, lazily stretching his feet nearer the fire.

At this query the stranger betrayed a startled mien, dropping his spoon, and partly turning his head to listen with more intentness; but apparently controlling himself he resumed his spoon, and with an abstracted manner discussed the viands placed before him, drank, or rather swallowed at a gulp his cup of tea, his hand trembling as he placed it back — and then complaining of diminished appetite, he arose from the table, and with as careless an air and expression as he could assume, seated himself in the midst of the little company, just as the teamster was saying, “It’s a mighty dismal place that part of the country, and there ain’t but one pair of feet, I reckon, that knows the way to tramp to it.”

Nick, who sat a little back in the gloom, looked up with a quick intelligence lighting his features, instinct with cunning, and making a rapid movement with his fingers, snapped them in the air.



“Who’s them? why them’s the feet of old Indian mother Kurstegan, hasn’t she lived in the heart of that swamp for ten years? and didn’t the child live there till she died?”

At this a deadly pallor settled over the stranger’s face.

“What proof have you that the child died?” asked another.

“Why! old mother Kurstegan herself told me that she dug the grave with her own hands; besides, I’ve seen its ghost, which is always to be seen on mooney nights — and the music — there! — listen — always goes with it, storm or shine, when old mother Kurstegan is traveling. She’s coming here to night, I’ll venture.”

“But let’s know about the *child*,” said another, for the old man had crossed his knee, and, nursing one heavy foot with his great brawny hand, was looking musingly into the fire.

“Well,” returned the first speaker, “I’ve heerd she was a love child, and I’ve heerd she was born on the high seas in a pirate vessel; and I’ve heerd worst stories than either about it, but I’ll tell you: Did any of you ever hear that old mother Kurstegan was the widder of an English chap — a pretty high chap, too, in the English service?”

A general exclamation of surprise went round.

“Yes, she was *that*; for when she was an Injun-gal in the forest, this young chap was taken by the Injuns, and pinte for to be shot or burned, and this young gal saved his life, consequence of which he carried her off to England, put her into school, give her an edicashun and married her. Well, I’ve heerd he didn’t treat her jest right, and didn’t leave nothing to her or the child when he died; so you see the old woman had a hankerin to come over here to her old home, and she became an Injun doctress, and made a heap of money, so that she lived well, *like* folks, and had a house in Philadelphia, and give her young daughter book-larning. Well, that child wan’t but fourteen, but then she looked a reglar woman grown, when there come along a handsome chap (such chaps the devil allows to be handsome, I suppose,) and he persuaded this gal to run off and pertend to get married; and then this gal goes back and begs her mother to forgive her. But it had crazed the old woman, along with her other troubles, and she cursed her, and struck her and driv her out of the house. Well, nothing more ain’t heerd of her — hark!” — a soft strain like the sound of an *Æolian* harp, followed in the lull — “these ten years scene.”

The stranger, whose pallor had not abated but rather increased, turned his head uneasily and listened. It was a wild, sad, plaintive strain, and in connection with the rattling storm without, and the melancholy story within, sounded doubly impressive. It certainly was like the voice of a child — now plaintive, now almost joyful. The stranger shuddered and bit his white lip — but the rain poured again, the wind blew, the casements shook and the teamster went on with his story:

“The old woman, she grew kind o’ crazed, as I said, and was so for a long time; is yet, I reckon. What became of the gal, her dar



ter, I never knew: most likely she died, as such poor unfortunats generally does; but our *gentleman* — I'd like to whale him with my last whip — got married to a beautiful young lady, they say, and in less than a year they had a little daughter. Well —" here he cleared his throat, turned himself more squarely toward the fire, drew a long blue and yellow handkerchief from the breast-pocket of his shaggy brown jacket, applied it vigorously to his nose, shook himself like an overgrown dog, and glancing carelessly toward the stranger, resumed the story with an air of importance.

"Now you see, this Mother Kurstegan wants to have her revenge. Who blames her? If a child is stoled, (for if her virtue be gone — what is left?) and the time comes for me to make 'em sting who wrongs me — who's to blame! It's true," he added, with an oracular shake of the head, "the good book says, leave all such things to Him who governs, but then He used to govern the people so't they stoned to death them that did sich things. But that ain't nothing here nor there; I ain't no Christian; I doesn't pretend to be a Christian in the sense I take sich things."

The stranger still sat moveless, shading his forehead and eyes from the red heat; now he spoke abruptly, and his lips scarcely moved as he said — "Finish your story, my friend, it has interested me."

"I was going on to say," resumed the teamster, "that the old woman watched her chance and stole a child. I don't know in course *whose* child she stole, but I can *guess*, and it's reasonable enough to reckon that it was one that would be mightily missed. She took it to some cave among the hills here — where, nobody knows; and how the little critter fared, the Lord only knows, for no human eye that I knows of has seen the old fortune-teller's cave-hut. It's my opinion, and I ain't alone, considering what a witch she is for telling things that come to pass, that the old one helps her, for I've tried more'n a dozen times, in a dozen different places, to keep my footing in that wet woods, and the mud is a'most waist deep, wherever I've been."

"This gentleman is sick," said the young man, Park Dinsmore, springing from his seat.

The stranger did indeed tremble from head to foot, but he controlled his great emotion, whatever had caused it, and moving his chair a little back, said —

"The heat is quite oppressive;" then added, faintly, and in a voice whose steadiness was assumed, "you say the child really died?"

"Some doubt it," exclaimed the parrot-nose, eager for a share of the notice appropriated by his garrulous friend, "I doubt it; who's to tell? Old Mother Kurstegan says so — but sometimes she says she's dead herself — there's no understanding her."

"Why have not the proper authorities seen into this matter?" demanded the stranger, sternly; "shame on you all, to let a poor innocent babe be murdered in the backwoods."

"Who do you spoze would dare to go to the cave-hut?" asked another; "and as to the authorities, they are as much afraid of old Mother Kurstegan as they are of their old master, the devil. It's a



black thing though; but, sir, do you think it any worse to steal a child, than to deceive a woman?"

The question was directly put, but before the stranger's agitation would allow him to answer, some one said —

"Hark! there's old Mother Kurstegan herself. Come storm, come witch — now, boys, for fun!"

A stamping, and a shrill, sharp voice, like the rattle of a hoof and the yelp of a dog combined, were heard outside the door. The stranger arose with a dignified manner, and beckoned Nick to show him to his room. It was not noticed how faltering were his steps, nor how haggard and white his face had grown; all were looking intensely for the appearance of the weird woman whose affairs had monopolized the evening's conversation.

The boy, with a flickering light in one hand, led the way through a low entry, odorous of baked meats, up a steep, uncarpeted flight of stairs, along through a smaller passage, terminating in one still narrower that diverged to the right, and laying his hand on the latch, threw open the door. The cheery sound of a crackling wood fire, and its bright amber light playing along the whitewashed walls and white hangings of the high-post bedstead, gave the low ceiled room a home-like aspect, and though the windows rattled, and the rain spent its mimic musketry against the glass panes, the cheerful light and warmth seemed doubly welcome and pleasant by contrast.

"This will do," murmured the stranger, surveying the matted floor, the wide fireplace, the quaint old chairs, and barbarous ornaments of cracked and broken china; "set down the lamp, boy, and hold this portmanteau, while I unlock it."

Nick did as he was told, looking wonderingly into the stranger's face while he performed the office required. The latter stood, his cloak half swaying from his stately figure, gazing absently at him; but as if suddenly recollecting himself he put the key to the lock, opened it, threw down the portmanteau, and commenced again the study of the boy's features.

"What is your name?" he asked at length, folding his arms over his chest.

"Nick, sir," said the boy, humbly.

"Well, and what else?"

"Poor-house, they call me sometimes, sir. I has no other name."

"How old are you, Nick?"

"Don't know, sir."

"Where were you born?"

"I don't know, sir; I wasn't there," replied the boy innocently; "I guess nobody don't know; cause they say I was left there in a basket."

"Left where?"

"In the parish work-house, sir; that's where the master took me from."

"So, you don't know any thing about yourself?" repeated the man.



"No, sir, only here I be," said the boy with a quick intelligence.

"How long do these storms last in this part of the country? Put your hair back — so; now, look me in the face; how long did you say?"

"Sometimes two days or so, sometimes a week; then we has plenty of folks," repeated the boy.

"And does this old Indian witch" (the boy started and looked uneasily toward the door), "usually travel about in the storm?"

The stranger had allowed his wide cloak to fall over the chair-back, and resting his head on one hand, sat like a king unbending from the cares of state.

"Yes, Mother Kurtesgan comes in the rain always; she never goes off other times, cause somebody'll maybe find her old hut."

"Did you" — the stranger paused, and his eye grew full, and his brow flushed till the veins stood out, and then, after a very little pause, he ventured again — "did you ever see the little child they were speaking of?"

"Oh, yes, I used to, sometimes, till she died; you see, I got lost once, and was almost starved, when old Mother Kurstegan found me and kept me ever so long."

"How did she look, my boy?"

"She was pale; she was a little mite of a thing," replied the boy; "me and old Mother Kurstegan is the only one as knows how to get through that place — dreadful ugly place — lots of snakes."

"Will you go there for me, my boy?"

Nick cowered, and his face changed.

"I wouldn't dare!" he said, in frightened accents; "'cause why? she'd turn me into an owl or a wolf; she's done that to folks many a time."

"Fool!" muttered the man. Then suddenly his mood changed, and in a harsh voice he said: "you'll go if I go with you. I'll give you gold; see here!" and he pulled out a handful of sovereigns, and rattled them before the eyes of the boy; "will you go for these?"

"I darsn't . indee, darsn't! old Mother Kurst is powerful wicked, she'd kill me to onct," cried the boy; "I wouldn't go for all the money in the world!"

Louder and louder, vieing with the great gusts without, rolled up the shouts of laughter from the kitchen.

"Stop," said the stranger, as Nick was crouching back into his wonted position; "the old woman tells fortunes, don't she?"

"Yes, great ones," replied the boy; "they calls her a witch — I guess she be, too."

"Well, go down and say to her that a gentleman wants her to tell him his fortune; and show her this," and he thrust a gold piece into the boy's hand.

Nick departed with alacrity; he had felt a vague uneasiness in the presence of this man. The stranger was left alone with his own thoughts, which, to judge by the expression of his countenance,



were none the pleasantest. Very cheerful looked the low, wainscoted chamber, with its brown, broad beams over head, its scrupulously white half-curtains, its hearth-mat made of bits of colored cloth, displaying yellow roses on red stems. Gloriously cheerful it was in contrast to the whirling storm that beat continuously against the windows.

## CHAPTER III

### MOTHER KURSTEGAN AND THE STRANGER

As the stranger's tall form disappeared from the kitchen, the old Indian woman entered. She was a person, as before described, of a gaunt but powerful frame, and to-night the loose skin hung in wrinkles, and her face, sharp and sinister, told the story of baffled spite and a hard contention with fate. Hate shone from her bleary dark eye, cunning lurked in her beetling brows, and avarice drew the lines of her mouth as tightly as the Indian draws the string of his bow. Her clothes were wet and clung to her limbs; an old bonnet blown out of shape she threw from her head as she came forward with long strides, and glanced sullenly from face to face.

"I don't know ye, only one or two," she said, in a voice harsh and grating to the sensitive ear; "yon lad's a stranger, and ye're all of ye more or less a pack of thieves, I reckon. Where's that Mastey? I want a crust or something — I'm hungry."

"I thought you lived upon dried witch-skins, Mother Kurstegan," said the parrot-nose, removing his pipe, "with moonlight sauce, and stars for potatoes. I've heard that it rains puddings up your way, and all you have to do is to put out your tongue and ketch 'em!"

The Indian only shook her fist at him, and seated herself on the floor.

"Ye are all a set of unmannerly boors," she said, wrathfully, "not to give an old woman a seat and a bit of fire when she's wet to the bone; may your own mothers know what it is to want the same favor!"

"Oh, come here, Mother Kurstegan," said one and another, moving away; and young Park Dinsmore sprang with alacrity from his seat, and pushing it before the blazing fire, beckoned her to take it. It was a pitiful sight to him, who was so fond of his own mother, to see this poor wreck, with her dripping garments and bony figure, ugly and uncouth as she was.

"Ugh! I like you," said the old woman, taking the seat, "and if you wasn't a pretty boy, I'd give you a good fortune but," and she shook her head, looking at him sorrowfully.

"Here Mother Kurstegan, here's a piece of money; take it and tell my fortune," said the parrot nose, offering her a sixpence.



"Shall I?" cried the old woman, accepting the silver, while the red blaze gave her face an expression of unusual ferocity. "well, then, in the first place, your wife will be lame in one foot, withered in one hand, blind in one eye, deaf in one ear, and have a tongue that will measure you for your coffin."

A shout of laughter followed the blank discomfiture of the man.

"She shall be sick fifty-two weeks in the year," added the Indian, looking round with a gesture of triumph, "make bread like stone-bullets, give you carrot-water for coffee, scalding water to shave with, and dip your head in a bucket of tar if you don't do whatever she tells you to."

"Hurrah! bravo!" cried the teamster, clapping his hands.

"And you," cried the old woman, turning spitefully toward him, "will go further and fare worse."

"Oh, now, Mother Kurstegan," said the teamster, with a look of real disappointment, "you said I should have Masty only a week ago!"

"Did I? well — humph! if you can *get* her, so you may," remarked the crone, nodding her head to the fire.

"Mother Kurstegan has got something on her mind," said an old farmer, with a shock of gray hair and a green frock, as he pushed the tobacco into a fresh pipe; "she used to do middling well at it, but she's gin out; her memory ain't what it was once, and she ain't so young nor so handsome as she used to be."

"My memory!" cried the old woman, with flashing eyes and a changed voice; "boys! fools! you don't any of you know what it is to have burnt into your brain as with red-hot iron, such wrongs that the waters of all the floods can't wash out. I'm a broken old wreck!" she added, in a softened, melancholy tone.

Park Dinsmore turned with new interest to the half-crazed creature, and she evidently felt his scrutiny, for she raised her dark eyes to his face, and, with a sudden animation, exclaimed:

"Boy, I will read your destiny; come nearer;" then, raising her shrunk and sinewy hand as he moved toward her, she took his, and scanned the palm intently.

"For him that respects old age," she said, solemnly, and in a low tone, "whether in rags or velvet, whether with the crown of a king upon his head or the beggar's cap, I would, if in my power, see nothing unpleasant — yet, young man, there are crosses, crosses in your destiny."

"I'll bear 'em bravely, mother," replied the frank-faced youth, smiling as he spoke.

"Ay! that you will," she answered, her withered heart evidently growing warmer and warmer toward him; "for he to whom woman is holy for the sake of Mary, Mother of Jesus, and for the love of his own mother, will wear his armor like a man and a soldier. You were born to a bright lot; you were cradled in wealth;" she paused for a moment, as if mastering some unpleasant memory;



"you have crossed mountains and rivers and seas — you have been in danger many a time, and will be again."

"Just so, mother," said the youth, looking all the astonishment the correctness of her language called forth.

"There's a high house on a hill," she continued, "gazing down upon meadows and fields, and far away from any swamp-land. And I see you there, after the trouble is over, happy, rich, and contented. And I see by your side a young wife — for you would scorn to dishonor the lowliest woman," she almost shouted, raising one hand to her head in a frenzied way — but, calming herself, she continued, "and she has the brightest gold-brown hair, and the softest brown eyes and the reddest cheeks I ever saw. Ay, she's a pretty young creature, and she has seen sorrow, too. And there are three little children, one a beautiful baby — there isn't that man nor woman would do you the harm to wish a black wish to that sweet little baby — but I've known, ah, *I've* known what I wouldn't tell you;" she paused, holding up one skinny forefinger, while in the lull the soft, solemn strain of the storm came floating by. The farmers looked at one another and shrugged their shoulders. At that moment Masty came in, with her hands full of eatables, which she set on the table, saying,

"Here, Mother Kurstegan, ain't you hungry after your long tramp? Come and eat something."

While the old woman devoured the food, keeping up a running fire of wit with Mastina (for she seemed to have the faculty of adapting her language to the company she was in), the men laid their heads together, and presently, as the old woman came toward the fire again, one of them cried out,

"Say, Mother Kurstegan, is that cave-child really dead?"

"Well, yes, the storm has been mighty powerful up our way," replied the old woman, with readiness, indifferently holding her hands toward the fire; "did you say you was afraid?"

A loud laugh followed.

"You don't git round us that way, old lady," said the Pennsylvania teamster; "we've heerd stories as how the gal was living yit, and by jingo! it's a mighty mean shame to keep a little gal in limbo that 'ere way, any how!"

"If you ever speak of that to me again," shouted the old woman, turning so fiercely upon the teamster that he pushed his chair from the hearth, "I'll tell the company which of your relations got hung."

"And I'll fell which of yours ought to be," replied the teamster, his temper flashing up in his face, "and she ain't far from it either."

The Indian woman, with an unexpected and vigorous blow, sent the man backward, chair and all; and the teamster lay ludicrously rolling over in his effort to regain his balance. As he slowly arose, with a face of ashy whiteness, shout after shout of laughter made the rafters of the old room ring again. Fortunately, at this moment, Nick



came with the message from above stairs, and while Masty, laughing till the tears ran down her cheeks, brushed the sand from the teamster's back, the old woman, dragging her wet garments after her, trailed her way out of the kitchen.

Nick, not well aware whether he did right or wrong, followed at a safe distance up the stairs, but she tramped rapidly as if she knew the way by heart, and shot into the chamber, shutting the door behind her. The boy crouched down close by the threshold, wondering what the stranger could possibly want of old Mother Kurstegan. Meanwhile, as the evening was waning toward midnight, the men dispersed to their beds, and Mastina raked up the fire in the kitchen.

As the Indian beldame entered the room where sat the stranger, and which was now lighted only by one flickering flame, she advanced to the fireplace, and stood with folded hands, looking uneasily about her. The candle had been extinguished, and its unsavory smell filled the room; the high blaze had evidently been smothered with water, for the ashes were blown about the hearth as if by a sudden concussion. The stranger still sat in the great arm-chair, his cloak about his shoulders, a dark silk handkerchief bound over his temples, his face resting on his left hand.

"They say you tell fortunes, good woman," he said, lifting his eyes uneasily, and letting them fall again, while his lips locked together with such pressure that their outline was almost lost. At the sound of his voice the woman turned her head slightly, and it was fully a moment before she answered.

"Yes, I tell fortunes when there is any fortune to tell; but sometimes those that hear me wish that I had held my tongue;" she said coldly.

"I sent for you to tell mine, and if you hit the truth in any thing you say, I will give you a gold piece."

"Let me see your hand," said the woman, coming close to him — then as she took it she dropped it, and said, "that's the hand of a man that's seen a mighty sight of trouble — and," she added in a lower tone — "done a mighty deal of harm."

"Go on," he said, coldly.

The woman shuddered as if conscious of an evil presence.

"I like to see a man's face when I tell his fortune," she said, evasively; "light the candle so that I may count the lines in your forehead."

"Is your art, then, dependent upon such paltry tricks?" exclaimed the stranger, impatiently. "I thought you read from intuition, and a knowledge of your —" he said no more, for the Indian stepping back had changed to a fury. Her eyes, naturally large, flashed like fire, while the seams on her dark face quivered and deepened, and her lips grew pale. Slowly the man lifted himself from his seat, gazing with a cowardly fear showing under his assumed surprise, and almost cowering under her gaze. At last he spoke, "It is I who suffer most, woman; give me my child!"

In vain she strove to speak. Her gaunt frame shook, her pallid



lips trembled, her long, snaky locks writhed upon her bosom — her hands clutched at the air — but she hissed at last through her clenched teeth, “Accursed of God and man — give *me* back *my* child. You made my life a desert; you tore a mother’s heart; you desolated me and mine. Viper! stand there and look. I know you; I felt you in the air below; your trail was on the ground I passed over; your breath tainted the storm.”

“Silence, beldame!” cried the man with a fierce gesture, “and tell me, where is my child? Look! I will give you gold — a fortune if you will restore her. Her mother is dying, broken hearted; tell me where she is?”

“Go look at her bones,” said the other in a low, exulting voice, “they are all that’s left of your delicate baby; and so *she* is dying — oh? ha, ha, ha, ha! and the child is dead — ha, ha, ha, ha!”

“Dead!” and the man seemed to lose power as he stood — “dead” he repeated in a blank voice.

“You like news, you like *good* news, don’t you?” said the woman bitterly, “you’re an editor and give the people news; go spread it, tell of the old Indian woman who could talk like a lawyer; it will make your paper sell — but I’ll whisper something in your ear — oh! don’t be afraid of me — I’ve lost the Indian taste for blood by hearing how white folks kill; the child isn’t dead, nor likely to be. But let me tell you, Horace Le Vaugn, you will never see your child.”

Why record the fearful recriminations, the awful imprecations that passed in the chamber of that old inn, while the storm chanted a woe-ful requiem. The boy, outside, pale with terror, crouched nearer to listen, and in his fright sometimes sprang to his feet to run, but fascinated by the sound of discord, he still remained, till the old woman, making a plunge at the door, left the chamber, flinging her curse back over the threshold.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### CHIP BEGINS TO SEE THE WORLD.

No one seemed to give a moment’s thought to the old Indian woman, who, in the extremity of her rage, ran from one end of the large kitchen, whither she had wended her way, to the other, muttering, cursing, pulling her disheveled locks, and wringing her hands.

The fire had been carefully raked over, and darkness wrapped the room, yet up and down she flew, like a fury, talking to herself so loudly and passionately, that had it not been for the wildness of the reveling winds, and the excitement of the night, the inmates must have been disturbed. Exhausted at last by this fruitless rage, the poor demented creature trailed her rags toward the fireplace, pulled out the ponderous irons, uncovered the coals and stirred them, and



then crouched down by their fitful warmth. Presently she gathered some of the morrow's kindlings and threw them on, blowing the embers, on hands and knees, till they sent a curling blaze among the light wood.

"There!" she muttered, "now it would be a satisfaction to heap them at *his* door, and let them burn, burn."

She sat rocking her body and thinking, with knitted brows and lips working convulsively. The bright flare gave to her gray, seamed face an unearthly look, stamped as it was with evil passions, and threw into bold relief the colors with which, with the gaudy taste of the Indian, she had patched her grotesque attire. Now and then the shadows of the tall chairs and heavy cornices trembled along the floor; the old clock ticked with monotonous tone, and the souging wind, like an evil presence, moaned down the chimney.

"The boy was with him. Nick," she muttered again; "yes, yes; it was he who ran before me — the little cur, to listen. And this man will hire him to go to the cave — give him money. No, no; Mother Kurstegan is cunning, foolish and crazed though ye all think her; she'll be traveling by day-light, while the rest are sleeping in their beds — and somebody else with her; yes, somebody else with her," she added, in a shrill, sing-song, trembling voice.

Adjusting herself along the hearth, the old woman prepared to sleep. Occasionally she would start, raise herself upon one elbow, peer about the kitchen, above, below — listen intently, with a gleam in her wild eyes, but gradually fatigue overcame her and she sank into a fitful slumber. The fading fire shot up, painting her hollow eyes and sunken cheeks a cadaverous blue, glimmered along the fading embers, and finally died out, leaving her in the deep, howling gloom, asleep.

The clock struck four, when Mastina entered the kitchen with a lighted candle. Walking straight up to the fireplace, she had almost fallen over the extended figure of the old woman, who had not yet awakened.

"Lawk! you old witch!" she grumbled, when her momentary fright was over, "who'd a'thought of finding *you* here? Hallo, old woman, Mother Cursing or Kurstegan, or whatever your name is," she cried, moving her with her foot, "come, I've got work to do here — get breakfast for a dozen lazy louts who calls themselves men, and expects a woman to git up before morning, if she's worked as hard as they have. Yes," she muttered, "a teamster has mighty hard work, most of the time; it's a dreadful thing to sit in a wagon twelve hours and be dragged by two great, strong beasts. I say, you old witch, don't you hear?"

"Yes, yes; but you can't have the child; you can't have the child — no, not if you coined your heart's blood," muttered the old woman, sleepily, rising slowly from her bed of ashes, and heavily unclosing her bleared eyes.

The girl laughed, kindled the fire, and, accompanied by her candle, went out to fill the kettle. When she came back the damp air



blew through the kitchen; the door was left open through which Mother Kurstegan had gone; a pool of water, formed during the night, lay in the hollow passage way, and the damp bushes at the door sprinkled their heavy tears upon the gray stone slab outside.

The road was skirted by thick woods, and the Indian pressed on under the perpetual showering from the trees. The wind blew dismally, penetrating the folds of the water-soaked blanket folded about her gaunt, haggard figure. Through her dull eyes, the way was dark before her, but the morning was breaking cold and gloomily. Sometimes she hummed the snatch of an old tune; sometimes muttered in Delaware, her native dialect; often she paused, and with lips firmly set shook her head defiantly; sometimes she whistled, or strained her ear to listen for the wheels of some early teamster, who might, through fear if not compassion, indulge her with a ride as far as he went. Soon the opaque atmosphere brightened a little, giving form and color to the drizzling rain that fell unweariedly. As she journeyed on, the country became more open and rugged. Miniature hills alternated with miniature valleys; masses of rock unevenly piled, relieved the monotony of bush and stunted pine. At length coming to a strange formation of stone and earth, over which the huge branches of a century-elm fell with a picturesque effect, and where a new pine growth spread foliage and roots, the old woman paused. Looking about her to be sure no one was near, she parted the scraggy covering, crept through what appeared to be a fissure in the rock, and emerged on the other side into a low wooded ravine, and from thence into a tract of woods untouched by the hand of the pioneer. Along a path scarcely discernible, and filled now with branches and whatever the torrents had brought from the hills, she made her way into the thicket. With a dexterity that betrayed a practiced eye, she picked a narrow trail, sometimes sinking foot deep into a morass, and availing herself of overhanging branches or rotten logs, which she had evidently placed there with her own hands, she came to the base of the hill on the summit of which she dwelt. The way up this steep ascent, wooded to its top, was toilsome in the extreme. Many a time her strength failed her utterly, and she sat upon a stunted knoll or jagged rock, and bent her head upon her hands. It was late in the morning when she gained the little spot, where her hut was planted by the strong hand of nature. Drawing aside the bushes by which the entrance was concealed, she glided noiselessly within the rocky domicile. The floor was dry and carpeted richly with crust-like moss. Through another opening near the roof, the interior of this singular home became dimly visible. A furnace stood near the door filled with ashes. Two rude seats were ranged against the rough walls, with some regard to order, a large board being propped up between, answering for a table. A bed of dried moss in a covering of blue check lay in one corner, and on it, in this solitary, cheerless place, where no white man's footfall had ever sounded, shut in by forest trees, matted bushes and thick branches, lay a little child, a lovely little child, with pale cheeks, diminutive figure, and long, golden-tinted, gleamy hair,



streaming over the coarse pillow. Mother Kurstegan went toward her, stooped and gazed earnestly for a moment, then turned to her duties. Untying a bundle, in which, the night before, she had thrown the remnants of her supper, she laid them upon the table. Then she threw off her wet shawl, hung it upon a projection of the rock, and taking from beneath the bed some decent garments, she changed her draggled clothes for dry ones. Setting her furnace near the mouth of the tiny cave, she struck a fire with flints and tinder, and placed a roundabout utensil, filled with water, on the furnace top. Then from a box she took meal, and kneading it into a flat cake, set it to bake. Next she examined the child's clothes that lay beside her bed. They were large and coarse, and had been made out of her own garments. Taking from an old worn huswife a needle and some thread, she proceeded to stitch together such parts as needed repairing, muttering the while about her miserable sight; and after this was done, she made a little bundle of the clothes, and with a heavy sigh that spoke of regret, proceeded to waken the child.

"*Oh*, Chip, wake up!" she cried touching the delicate shoulder with her hard hand.

The little girl, accustomed to her voice, sprang upright and her dark eyes, in which a sweet yet mournful expression was predominant, turned instinctively toward the old Indian woman. She spoke not a word, but a wan, almost vacant smile flitted for a moment over her pensive features, and she pressed her little hands to her head with unchildish meaning in her look.

"Come, and dress yourself and eat your breakfast, for we've a long tramp to go this day."

The child turned again and gazed into the old woman's face, as if not comprehending the import of her language.

"Don't look so like a heathen, child," exclaimed Mother Kurstegan, "don't you want to see something of the world, poor little fool? don't you think it's almost time? Only think! ten long years, and you've never taken one step outside this wilderness. Well it don't know what the world is, but it shall, soon enough. Come, stop staring, I say, will you? and dress yourself! I'm going to carry you where you shall open your eyes before night."

A bewildering joy possessed the child; every fiber of her frame quivered; every nerve thrilled. In the intensity of the hate nursed by a shattered mind, it had been the old woman's policy to tell the wildest, most extravagant tales about the world beyond the little cave. And she had also taught her the darkest lessons of fear, filling the brain of the poor little girl with specters of horrible import, and beasts of hideous form, so that when the shadows fell upon the cave-hut, Chip, if alone, crept shuddering into her bed, and knew no God of whom to invoke peace and protection. But she had also told her that away beyond the precincts of her isolated dwelling-place, beyond the hills which she had watched glittering and glowing with the treasures of sun and dew, was the great world, where



houses were made of solid gold, and streets were filled with flowers, and angels with shining wings: and there was the softest light there and the richest music, and she should have whatever she wanted, and learn strange and wonderful things, and see sights of splendor.

At this, the poor little child, who had never, within her recollection, seen one human face or heard one human voice, save those of the old Indian woman, who told her that she found her growing one morning in the shape of a great tulip, and when she plucked it, it changed into a little girl, this poor heathen child palpitated from head to foot with delicious pleasure. Her eyes enlarged and shone like stars; she kept drawing her breath in great sighs, and trembled from excessive delight.

"Shall we see the *bad* creatures, too?" she suddenly asked, shivering at the thought, "and if we do, can you keep them away from me?"

"I told them all this morning that I should pass though the woods with you and commanded them to go to their hiding-places in the dark caves that stretch whole miles under the earth, and where all the winds and the storms, the thunder and lightning are kept," replied the old woman, with a gravity that might have impressed an older person than Chip. "I can do as I please with them," she continued "but I shall not let you see the beautiful streets and houses till I please; see, I blind your eyes now," and she made a few magnetic passes over the child's forehead. "There, now you will see nothing until I am ready. Then will come a great king with a splendid crown upon his head, and he will take you to his palace, and make you a little queen."

"Oh," cried the wan child, with sparkling eyes and eager face clapping her hands as she spoke, "I am so glad!"

"Take your fill of it then," muttered her strange companion, turning her back, "you will never be glad again, may be."

After they had eaten their simple meal, the old woman, bidding the child remain quiet, went out to take a look at the child's semblance of a grave. Trying the board, to see that it was firmly imbedded in the ground, and then gloating over it with an air of triumph, she again entered the cave, and prepared the child for its first entrance into the world surrounding its limited dwelling-place.

All things were duly prepared, and the Indian woman and her poor little protegee commenced their journey down the sides of the hill. For the first half hour, the child moved briskly along, casting timid glances on every side, and then she began to be so weary that Mother Kurstegan lifted her in her arms, and the little creature cuddled there more in fear than in love, while her strange protector took her sturdy steps along the path that none but her practiced eye could hope to discern.

"Won't the wicked folks follow us?" whispered the child.

"No, no! Hark, while I talk to them," and she began in a low, monotonous tone:



"Away, ye spirits of evil;  
 Away, ye toads and lizards;  
 I see your bright eyes twinkle  
 Like jewels under the sea-weed;  
 You follow the edge of my shadow,  
 But you can not bide in its color;  
 Your trail is over the spiked herb,  
 Your fingers have touch'd the wintergreen;  
 You've left your scent on the wet ground,  
 And your slimy touch on the brown leaves;  
 The toad grass rank is under your feet,  
 The yellow lily upon your heads,  
 Your beds are made in the rush grass.  
 Back, ye spirits of evil!  
 I can not give this child to ye!"

All this time, poor little Chip, with her eyes closed hard and scarcely breathing for fear, lay trembling, and dreading she knew not what; but presently, feeling a cooler wind upon her cheek, she suddenly found herself thrust through an aperture, standing and shivering on the wet ground, the water-drops sparkling as they dripped on her head from the branches of the great elm.

"There!" exclaimed Mother Kurstegan, "we are out of the woods, and now, before we see those great sights, we must walk on, on, a long ways till the sun goes down."

The child scarcely heard, such new and mingled emotions took possession of her hitherto imprisoned soul. She gazed about her. The hay lay in great red swaths over a large field but lately mown; and the grey grass glistened as if every spear was golden-tipped. The sky above — such masses of shining blue! such a wide, wonderful, glorious expanse, gemmed with thousands of little white clouds, soft as the snow, and lustrous as silver! She walked along, wing-footed; her eyes dilated, and were filled with a fiery delight.

The day was almost gone. The Indian cake had been eaten for dinner many hours ago, and foot-sore and tired, poor Chip could not walk any further. She was very hungry; her little feet were bleeding — for although Mother Kurstegan had pitied her in her savage way, and taken her up many times, the child was wholly unaccustomed to walking, and her feet were thinly protected. Evening was coming on, and the child to whom the novelty of sight-seeing had grown stale, wondered when she should see those great people, dressed so finely, and, above all, the king with a crown on his head.

Mother Kurstegan looked about her and saw in the distance the bright red roof of a barn. She placed Chip on a rock by the wayside, cunningly concealing her, as she thought, by the bushes, and bidding her be quiet till her return, on peril of being eaten alive, left her to beg some refreshment. Scarcely had she gone out of sight before poor little Chip, wearied almost to death, began to cry bitterly. As she sat there, the tears falling over her white cheeks, she saw, far down the road, a strange thing that looked so evil, she did not doubt it was one of those frightful beings that the old woman had often conjured upon in the wilds of their lonely home. She grew colder



and whiter, and held her breath, and clasping her hands without power to move, as the terrible object, with a noise that seemed louder than thunder, came rumbling along, with two fearful creatures abreast.

"Holloa!" shouted a coarse voice; "that's somethin' human."

The monster market-wagon came to a dead stand opposite the frightened child, and a man with a heavy beard, and slouching straw-hat flapping over his sunburned face, and upon his farmer's frock, surveyed the shrinking child fixedly.

"Got lost, little one?" he asked.

No answer — only the wild eyes glared, and seemed to throb with fright.

"Hilloa! Say, little girl, are you lost?" he asked again. Still the child was utterly incapable of replying, but she sobbed and moaned in a pitiful way.

"Well! this is a strange fix for a young 'un like that, seems to me. Must been walking all day, too; little feet bleeding — sho! looks tired to death. Here little one," he soliloquized, moving to descend from his wagon; "night's a coming mighty fast, and whether you're strayed, lost, or stolen, I shall take you up and tote you home — 'taint more'n a Christian duty. Whoa! Jeff, while I git out and take this youngster, in."

Chip had not stirred, could not move. A deathly sickness came over her as she felt the grasp of the strong-handed man, and found herself swinging up in the great wagon, and presently deposited upon some soft straw behind the seat. Fear had paralyzed every energy; she shivered with a vague horror that she was to be thrown into some hole with all the imaginary hobgoblins that her demented old keeper had taught her to fear. Meanwhile Mother Kurstegan had gained the house, little dreaming, as she paused to tell a young girl's fortune, that the treasure she had periled so much to obtain and to keep, was even then a mile from the spot where she had left it in seeming security.

## CHAPTER V.

### LE VAUGHN VISITS THE CAVE — CHIP'S NEW HOME

"WHOA . you beast — whoa."

The sound reached Le Vaughn, who opened his window and gazed into the stable-yard. Every dry stick, leafless twig, and withered glass-blade, was gemmed with dew, and the wide area of the tavern was all astir. Turkeys, hens, chickens, cats, and dogs, stared in mute wonder at the vision of the old coach and the lean horse that Job Goolale prized next to his wife and child.



"Stage ready!" cried Park, mounting with a flourish, handling the reins in true driver-style, and turning the lumbering vehicle, out of whose broken windows looked the pleasant face of the professor — and away they drove.

Le Vaughn turned from the window, to prepare for his visit to the cave. Breakfast over, his horse was brought round, Nick placed on the saddle behind him, and they proceeded on their way. It was a cool, but vividly fresh and lovely morning. The dew lay like crowded jewels on the bushes by the wayside, lighted with splendor by the sun. The gaudy flowers of autumn expended all their vitality in bloom, and the closely-set edges of the road, bordered with pines, oaks, and maples, gave out their peculiar odor.

The sun was two hours high when they neared the spot which Nick remembered as having passed through, and which now, even with the presence of Le Vaughn, he trembled to approach. The previous rains had saturated and swollen the earth, and at every step the mud and water oozed up over their feet. Le Vaughn tied his horse, drew his boots up outside his nether garments, and after surveying the bush and peering in vain through the matted undergrowth, essayed to thrust himself through on the other side.

"You see I'm waiting for you."

The voice was low, hollow, and unearthly. Nick stood shivering in every limb, and Le Vaughn glanced aghast as the gaunt form of Mother Kurstegan lifted itself from the forest-gloom, and her chuckle defiant with suppressed malice, sounded on his ear.

"Did you expect to find it with *that* witling?" she asked, pointing to Nick, who crouched away with terror. "He! ha! set a fool to lead a fool on a fool's errand. Come, you see I expected you, and so waited; if you want proof I'm ready to give it."

So saying, she plunged into the path, and Le Vaughn followed her, forgetting Nick, who, in his excitement and terror, clung to the place through which he had emerged, and as soon as he lost sight of the two, eagerly found his way out into the road.

"Take care, don't break your neck," muttered the old woman, turning at every plunge, and smiling grimly at the bespattered object in her rear; "this is a swampy place, reckon you think; it ain't like the city streets you're used to, is it, honey."

Thus mockingly she taunted him, until they came on firmer ground, and began the ascent of the hills.

"See, now, isn't this a fine open place to bring up a child?" at last she said, pausing and confronting him; "no brick walls, no stifled yards — all nature, grand nature, my own mother once," she cried, lifting her arms, "before the curse of the white man came upon me. Six long years they sent me to the schools, and took pride in my quickness and my genius; but it was only a curse to the Indian girl; sorrow was the first great lesson, made stronger and keener by the possession of knowledge. And the same with my own child. Oh! why didn't I take her into the wilderness and bring her up in solitude, never to see the face of man? Come, come



along," she added, in another mood, "I've got a nice little grave to show you, up here."

The words and the manner struck a deathly chill through the frame of the strong man, but he followed on, though his knees smote together, and his heart failed him for fear. At length they reached the hut, when, springing inside the little cave, the Indian exclaimed:

"Now you may go away as wise as you came; I can defend myself, and you can't come in here, for if ever a tigress sought to revenge the loss of her young, I am she."

Le Vaugn dared not enter; he felt that if he did so it would be at the peril of his life. He turned, and the little shaft of wood, with the epitaph burnt thereon, met his sight. With a great cry he wrenched the board out from the moist ground, and then he listened and crouched down by the door of the cave, fancying he heard the click of a gun-lock.

"The hag! she will murder me, for aught I know; the place and the hour are fit. Hark!" and he listened again, then sought to find crack or crevice that he might look within, but in vain—all was silent.

As he stood there, the moldy board at his feet, his lips locked together, his teeth clenched, and with folded arms, glaring round on the regal surroundings of lavish nature—the grand sky above him, the calm hills beneath—his thoughts were frightful, and his frame throbbed with the intensity of his emotions. His eye, dry and bright, wandered restlessly from the cave to the tracts of woodland below, as if he would find some traces of the little child's feet, for he would not believe her dead. His cheek, now sunken and pallid, now flushed and palpitating, betrayed by the rapid movement of the muscles the dreadful strife of thought. In imagination he saw a dimly lighted room, a couch on which was stretched a fragile figure, looking already shrouded for death, in her white garments. It was the pale, sweet, pleading face of his wife, who, since the time of her great trial, when from street to street echoed the cry, "a child is lost—stolen!" had never smiled, but in the anguish of her sorrow had wept night and day, till she stood a weary shadow, on the borders of the grave. Frantic with the crowding images that thronged his brain, he walked to and fro, back and forth, as the voices of earth seemed echoing his wife's mournful plaint, "bring me my child," and stooping, at last, he seized the wooden head-board, and threw the grave-soil up till he had reached the bottom. The coarse bag and the few bones it contained were all that rewarded his search. These he replaced, satisfied, after a momentary examination, that these were not human bones, and a bitter execration escaped him as he exclaimed:

"What means this mockery? the child is not here. Come out, Indian devil, tell me if she be living or dead, and I will leave this cursed spot."

A mocking laugh was the Indian's answer as she stood before him.



"I told you in the letter that she was alive, and so she is; I tell you, too, that she is dead; do you believe it? Hark! don't go off mad now; gentleman should never show temper; it may do for a savage. There, now, you are in a fume; how impolite! Shan't I hold your hand to steady you? Don't look at me that way, it isn't good manners. Come, let me comfort you. If you don't find one of your own blood *here*, you will in that little imp at the tavern. I told you you should certainly see your own child, and I have kept my word; take care of him as you would of her, and see what will come of it;" and taking a narrow, trodden path, she walked rapidly away, her laugh dying on the still air.

The hut was indeed empty; no trace of a child was any where to be seen. Baffled, enraged, the hapless father turned his face toward the descent. He was entirely ignorant of the locality, he had no note of the surroundings as he came, so that he found himself, after a little time vainly seeking a path in the thick forest at the foot of the hill.

"Why, Nick! how came you here?" he exclaimed, as the boy presented himself, in the time of his extremity, soiled and panting and pale.

"I felt 's if you'd want me," replied Nick, hanging his head at the warmth of voice and evident pleasure expressed by Le Vaugn.

"You did a brave thing, boy; you are no coward; I'll repay you for this; you shall go home and live with me, and be to me as a son."

The boy's dark eyes sparkled with pleasure, for his had been the hard lot of an outcast, from his infancy. Reared in a work-house, accustomed to daily cruelty, with no remembrance of father or mother, nothing to call out either love or ambition, it seemed like opening the light of a new world to him to hear the voice of kindness or commendation. Carefully Le Vaugn picked his way through the wood, Nick going before, until they came out where the horse still stood, impatient from his long confinement.

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"Gee — gete up, Jeff — jog along, Pete — don't you be frightened, sissy; guess the old woman 'll give you a good bed and something nice for supper. Ain't got no tongue, have you, sissy; got no tongue at all, same 's Mrs. Snackskin hain't got any work to do; drop down from the sky, just like a micey; nice little girl — haw get up, Jeff — here we are — here's the lane — there's Bob onhitching the gate — there's the young ones. Been good boy, Bob? Yaas — got a penny for you — now you let me get this ere little bundle out, and then you take the team and see to Jeff, now, and don't let Pete git too many oats, the greedy rascal. Come, little one."

Chip had been in the same bewildering state of mind from the time she was lifted in the wagon until the present moment. When she felt again the grasp of the rough but kindly hand, her little frame shook from head to foot. It was dusk, but not sufficiently deep to hide from her sight a swarm of yellow heads, each clamoring to know what dad had got.



"Git out, all of you; go into your ma and tell her I've brought another young one home, a poor little creetur I picked up by the side of the wild woods, with nary a livin' critter near her. Somebody or nuther got tired of her, I s'pose; like's not, folks is so heartless now-a-days;" and so talking, holding the trembling child against his heavy driver's coat, he entered the ample kitchen, followed by nine youngsters, clamoring, laughing, shouting, and demanding to see the queer thing dad had got.

Supper smoked on the table, and Chip, who by degrees began to be reconciled to the strange sights about her, allowed herself to be led to the well-filled board, and seated beside Bob, from whom, however, she instinctively shrank.

"I wonder if the child knows how to eat?" said Mrs. Snackskin, helping everybody; "what did you eat to home, little gal?"

"Johnny-cake," said Chip, at which they all laughed till she cowered down in her seat with fright.

"Don't you mind 'em, sissy," said the farmer, spreading a generous slice of bread with apple-sauce, and laying it on her plate; "they ain't got no manners here; was brought up with the pigs."

Chip ate with silence, casting timid glances around, the other children disposed of their food voraciously, and for hunger's sake, knowing little of and caring less for the rules of the table; and after supper, with a vigorous application of tongue and knuckles they were driven off to bed. By the flaring light of a dim candle, Chip saw a long, gloomy chamber, with heavy rafters overhead, and here and there a bed clumsily made, peeping out of the darkness. Around the walls garments hung; baskets and half-barrels stood on the uneven floor, heaps of corn lay in confusion, and a curtain, torn in strips by the mischievous hands of children, hung from the large window through whose broken panes the wind blew. Six of the children slept in this chamber, all girls, and Chip was to be crowded in with Kitty and Drony, the two youngest.

In the morning the poor little homeless and friendless waif was delirious with fever.

"It's plain to see here's a hard case on my hands, Hiram Snackskin," ejaculated his worthy dame, turning to her abstracted spouse, as, thoughtfully gazing in the fire, he replenished his pipe. "I haven't got nothing to do to-day, nothing at all; I'm a lady to dress in silks and satins and suck my fingers; yes, I haven't got two floors to scour and the week's ironing to do, besides churning and cooking, and it's because I haven't got *one single* thing to do that this child is on my hands. Oh, dear, dear! Hiram Snackskin, you were born, I do believe, to be the particular plague of my life."

"She'll do something to earn her salt, I warrant, wife," returned the prosy Snackskin.

"Earn her salt! do you know she's up-stairs raving with a fever? How do you know but it's an affectionate one, and all the children'll git it? Kitty says she hugged her close last night. I'm sure I don't know what I'm going to do."



"Going to take care of that child," said the man, stoutly; "if you won't, why, I will."

"You'll kill her, with that stuff," responded the wife.

"Let me alone for that;" and Hiram Snackskin wended his way up-stairs.

"Poor young 'un," exclaimed the benevolent Snackskin, standing at the foot of the bed and gazing compassionately on the child, "looks as if she'd got her death-warrant; poor little young un what is she talking about, you Kit?"

"She wants some drink," responded Kitty, looking very much as if she would like to get away from her charge.

"Well, she shall have it, so she shall. Lift her up, Kit, here's a nice bowlful of good strong coffee, nice and hot — drink, little gal."

Chip, in her feverish thirst, grasped the sides of the bowl with both hands, and sucked down the beverage, strong and hot as it was; then with a look of gratitude she fell back on the bed.

"Now just set and take good care of her, you Kit; tell her stories, and kinder lift her mind off of her feelings, and she'll be up by and by, fresh and hearty as ever. Don't you leave her now you hear! I'm going pretty soon with the hands, and your mother, she ain't got nothing to do, on'y to do every thing generally, so you must take care of the poor little gal; now mind."

He went down-stairs and out to the barn without saying any thing to his wife. Kitty, already tired of her irksome employment, crept to the window, and watched till she saw the farm-hands go off with him to the fields, then she muttered to herself that she wasn't going to wait upon a beggar, and slyly left the room.

Chip lifted her head with an effort; it burned and throbbed, and seemed to bound back and forth on the pillow with the fierce rush of blood through its arteries. She was all alone. The sunlight quivered through the narrow casement, but it did not light up the gloomy chamber with its many corners. The garments that hung against the wall moved strangely and solemnly to the child's excited fancy, and she moaned the name of Mother Kurstegan; even her presence had been welcome in this dreary hour. Once or twice she attempted to rise, but a strange sickening sensation held her back, pinioned to the bed. And then she began to talk; she was in her cave-home, playing with the rude toys the Indian woman had fashioned for her -- she listened to wild stories of demons and cruel beasts conjured by the weird brain of insanity; she lived over again the scenes of her departure from the only home she had ever known, and prattled of the beautiful sights she should soon see. Hour after hour passed and she was still alone. noon came, and the kind-hearted teamster ascended again to the little attic, and found her raving and laughing and shouting. He went down-stairs instantly, and taking Kitty, who had totally forgotten her charge, by the arm, shook her till she was red in the face; then turning to his wife, he exclaimed,

"I tell you what, old woman! you'll have the death of that poor child on your soul yet; are you a heathen to let her lay sick as a dog all alone?"



"Mercy on us, Hiram Snackskin, what is the child to me? I havn't got any children of my own - nothing to do all day but watch a strange gal because she's took a little cold. I thought one of the children was there. Ain't you going to eat your dinner?"

"Dinner be hanged! Children be hanged! P'ob, go and tackle up the colt; I'll have a doctor, if I have to go five miles for him, and give him five dollars beside. I tell you, Nancy, that's a sick child, and you ain't got any feeling for the poor little thing -- Drony, hand me them boots."

"I'd like to know what makes *you* take to the child so, Hiram Snackskin?" exclaimed the matron, with flashing eyes; "you ain't over much tender of your own, any how."

"Why, bless your sperrit, soul and body, woman!" ejaculated the farmer, fiercely, pausing with his left leg half way in his boot, "do I want a human critter to die under my roof like a dog, nobody a seeing to her, and she a raving with a fever? No, I'll be blistered if I do; ready, Bob; now," he added, with a quiet irony, "you all sit down and eat your dinners, comfortable, while she's up there dying, I'll see to her," and he was gone.

Mrs. Snackskin passed her hand across her eyes, but whether the tears were of grief or jealousy, it is impossible for me to tell. She could not eat, however, nor even sit down: but giving the table in charge of her eldest daughter, she crept up stairs, conscience-smitten. As she entered the attic chamber, Chip was standing upright in her bed, her slight robe fallen from her shoulders, her hands upraised, her eyes fastened upon the wall, dilated, and shining brighter than all human brilliancy, while from her parched lips came the words, "Mother, mother, take me too -- me too," and then, the spell broken, she sank down, cowering, shivering, and sobbing.

"She saw something," said the farmer's wife under her breath, and subdued, awe-stricken, she hurried to the bedside, and spoke motherly, soothing words. But Chip heard her not; her eyes were wild and glassy, her strength was gone, her breath came short and hot.

"Dear knows what I'm to do with her," murmured Mrs. Snackskin; "I wish I'd a thought more about her. She's been alone, poor thing!" and she shuddered as she thought of it. "Sissy, sissy," and she endeavored by endearing words to catch her attention, but in vain, the child had not strength to turn or even to look.

"What if her dead mother's bin a watching of her all this time," soliloquized the farmer's wife, gazing about the chamber with a fearful air, "I've heered of such things; dear me, seem's if I'm almost afraid to stay. I guess I'll cover the child up and take her down stairs." So saying she threw a blanket over the unconscious Chip and wended her way to the cheerful kitchen.

The crib was brought and furnished, and Chip laid therein silent, because exhausted.

In the midst of the noise, the odors of cooking, and the sounds of labor, the lonely child rested with scarcely a breath of life in her meager body. Sometimes Kitty or Drony would venture near, take



a peep, and then start fearfully back, resuming their noisy play. The matron alone manifested unusual anxiety by her looks, her frequent pauses, and her efforts to keep her large family quiet. At last, to her great relief wheels were heard, then a stamping at the door, and presently in walked the farmer and the doctor.

As the doctor and the good-hearted Hiram Snackskin entered the kitchen, the latter cast a glance of pleased surprise toward his wife who was just then smoothing the pillow and the pale hair of the little girl. With a professional air, the doctor began his examination, first stating that the child was very sick, but as he gazed at the pallid creature he began to be more interested in her appearance.

"She has singular beauty," he remarked, turning to the farmer, "whose child is she?"

"That I don't know," replied Hiram, "I found her sitting like a little dummy by the side of the road, and as she looked scared, sorter, when I spoke to her, I thought maybe she was lost, so I ups with her inter the wagon and drives her home. She got frightened, poor thing, at the dog last night; 'cordin to her symtons I sh'd think she hadn't never seen dogs nor no other hnman critters, but I don't know — she's a nice little thing, I guess."

"She is singularly lovely," repeated the doctor, pressing up the lid of her eyes to look at the leaden ball underneath, "and she is very sick with brain-congestion, poor little creature; poor little thing!" he ejaculated, turning with a frown at the same time to the noisy youngsters, "she should be more quiet; this is no place for her."

"I'm sure I don't know where I can keep her," replied Mrs Snackskin, peevishly.

"If there was any possibility of getting her home to my wife," mused the doctor, thoughtfully, standing with his finger on his lip. He was a stout, hearty, noble-featured man, with a Roman nose, front-head very bald and shining, and a clear, gray eye. Casting a troubled glance upon the little patient, he reflected a moment, and then ejaculated, "I'll do it. She may die under the journey, but there is more chance for her there than here. My good madam," he added, turning to Mrs. Snackskin, "if you will wrap the poor child carefully up in blankets, and if you, sir, who seem to take so much interest in her, will lift her in your arms and get into my buggy, and let your boy drive your own wagon after, I think we can transport her safely to my house."

"That I'll do, or any thing else for the poor thing, and thank you kindly, too," replied Hiram; while his wife, relieved of a great burden, hastened with rapid movement to envelop the child in blankets. This task done, the poor waif set out to find another home in what had hitherto proved to her so dreary a world.

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"My dear, who do you think has been here?" asked the doctor's wife as he stepped within his own hail.



"I could hardly venture to guess," replied the doctor hurriedly

"Mr. Le Vaughn, your old Philadelphia friend," returned his wife; "I tried hard to persuade him to remain till you came, but he would not; he was very much disappointed at your absence."

"Well, wife, I'll talk with you about it by-and-by; will you have a little bed prepared in your room? I have brought home a patient — a sick child."

Without troubling him with questions, the model wife of the good doctor hurried to execute his wishes, and in another minute the sick child was brought in, in the athletic arms of Hiram Snackskin, and placed upon a soft white couch.

"Dear little angel," murmured the doctor's wife, "where did you find her? whose child is she? has she no mother?"

"I should say not," said Hiram, his eyes fastened to the sweet face. "I found her myself, ma'm, half perished, as I may say," he added — proud of his part in the transaction.

"She's very sick, Jenny; you'll have to burden yourself to care for her."

"It will be no burden to me, you know, doctor; but oh! how sick she is!" and she knelt down by the little couch with the tenderness of a mother, while the doctor went out with farmer Snackskin.

"And now, dear wife, let me hear about Le Vaughn," said the doctor, after he had attended to his little patient.

"First tell me; is this a dangerous case?" asked his wife, laying her hand tenderly on the brow of the unconscious child.

"Her pulse is fainter than it was, her hands colder; we must get some ice, wife; her head is fearfully hot. Yes, it is a very dangerous case; the symptoms are all unfavorable," replied the doctor, "but, perhaps with good nursing and with God's blessing, we may bring her through."

"I never saw so sweet a child," mused the doctor's wife, the tears brimming up to her eyes; "she makes me think of our own little Lena."

"To tell you the truth, the same thought struck me," said the doctor, "and it was that resemblance about the lips and forehead that instigated me to bring her here."

"Shall we keep her if she lives!" the words were spoken low and tremulously, and the blue eyes with a tear in them, stole furtively toward the portrait of a sweet child that hung against the opposite wall.

"If it will please you, my love," he replied, then changing the subject, he asked about Le Vaughn again.

"He was in a great hurry, and on his way home," said his wife.

"On horseback, as usual, I suppose."

"Yes, following after the coach; but, my dear, I never saw a man look so badly."

"Following after the coach—what in the world do you mean — my dear?"

"Why, if I understood him, he had some one in charge in the



coach, but he was so excited and so strange, that I could hardly make any thing out of him. He seemed to me very much changed and very unhappy, said he felt as if there was sickness or trouble at home.

"Poor fellow ! he has never been the same man since the loss of his child," mused the doctor; "he was, when a young fellow, full of frolic, almost wild with the excitement of his exuberant life, gay, witty, and handsome; but since his marriage, or rather I should say since the mysterious disappearance of his child, he has been morose and unhappy."

"He prospers well," remarked his wife.

"Yes, and he is a man of splendid talents, but it seems as if the memory of some wrong clung to him."

"I don't know," mused his wife; "I rather think he is very much attached to his family."

"Undoubtedly," replied the doctor, "he idolizes his wife; but when young he was a great wine-drinker, and indulgence in that appetite may have led him to other excesses. The story may not be true, but I have been told, that he went through a pretended marriage ceremony with a young girl of fourteen, lived with her a while, and then deserted her. I do not know how true this is, I repeat, I only heard of it lately.

"And do you think the injured girl stole the child?" asked his wife.

"What eyes!" ejaculated the doctor, laughing in his wife's dilated orbs; "why I haven't thought of that — probably some emissary of hers if not herself; I shouldn't wonder."

"Such a romance!" exclaimed the doctor's wife, drawing a long breath; "see our little patient is stirring, the fever is coming on," she added, turning to the couch; "alas! poor child! who can tell your story!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### LE VAUGHN RETURNS TO A DESOLATE HOME.

It was a beautiful morning on the twelfth of September on which Le Vaughn, mounted on horseback, rode through the streets to his city home.

Had he not been preoccupied, a strange look of concern in the faces of the friends and acquaintances he met, would have been apparent to him, as he nodded and rode on. He would have seen here and there a man pausing to gaze after him, a boy placing his basket on the walk and turning to look, and one and another, from some shop door or step, suspending conversation while he passed, and nodding various gestures, as if they had suddenly broken off some theme to



talk of him. But he noticed none of these things as he moved toward his own residence. An unwonted solemnity fell upon him as he turned into the spacious street, lined with noble houses, and drew near to the marble steps of his own house. There he checked his horse, sat bolt upright, and gazed on the spectacle before him with livid countenance. A broad band of black crape crossed from the silver handle to the hinge; and the sunshine glistened on the slow waving badges of death, suspended from every closed window. A chill as if the hand of death were knocking at his heart, crept through Le Vaugn's frame; his strength deserted him, and he staggered as he dismounted. An old black servant, grey with many years, and bent with age and infirmities, came up that moment from the arched passage that led to the rear of the house. Seeing his master, he pulled off his old wool hat, bowed, came forward a little, but seemed unwilling to speak.

"Well, Tony, say on quick; here is bad news for me; what of my wife?"

"S'pose I go first and tell Marthy to open the do' for you, sir?" said the old man, respectfully, stepping back again, still unwilling to answer, while his lips trembled as his eye scanned the blanched face before him.

As if there were relief in uncertainty, Le Vaugn nodded, and moved with dragging steps up the bright entrance. Presently the door was opened by a tidy servant, who stood with her apron to her eyes, sobbing at sight of the master of the house.

"When did she die?" he asked, bracing himself firmly, as if to prepare for this sudden and unlooked-for misfortune — his forebodings and the solemn stillness of the house told him that he was no longer a husband.

"Two days ago, sir, and we've been looking for you so anxiously," said the girl.

Le Vaugn waved his hand impatiently, as if to check her, and turned to a neighbor who was just coming down the stairs, and who greeted him with a quiet manner and a subdued voice; and then, without further word or question, preceded him up-stairs, opened the door of a chamber, and as he entered shut it upon him with tender, womanly thoughtfulness. He was alone with the dead.

It was a sumptuous chamber, lofty and spacious, the walls frescoed in panels, the ceiling elaborately painted, and from the central group of cupids hung a glittering chandelier. The small, rare paintings were covered with crape; the blinds, nearly closed, let in a pale gray light over the carpet whereon never foot of poverty had rested; the statues seemed whiter and more mute before the bed of death. Not a shadow fell on the white counterpane, so pure and spotless, under which lay the slight form, scarcely sculpturing an outline, it was so fragile, so small and delicate. Still as the grave's quiet was the room, wont to be filled with light and beauty; neither voice, breath, nor whisper disturbed it now, for Le Vaugn stood breathless, stricken into a marble-like silence. The little French clock glittering on the mantel, his gift to her in the first days of their prosperity



marked with a sad and lonely sound, as if it were measuring over again the slow beating of her dying pulse. What with the anxiety and disappointment connected with the search for his child, and the sudden revulsion of feeling attendant upon the death of his wife, Le Vaugn was totally unmanned. His knees trembled under him, his strong frame shook with the tide of tears that dashed against his heart, and to which his eyes could not give egress; and his chest impetuously rose and fell. He threw himself upon the lounge on which her form had been wont to rest, and groaned in his terrible anguish, and gasped and sobbed with a dry, choking voice, till the first sharp grief was over. Then he lifted himself up, weak almost as an infant, tottered to the bed, and slowly and with shaking hand turned down the upper portion of the coverlet. The dead wife lay before him in her cold beauty. The soft hair glittered as richly as when in girlhood, but death had closed her sweet eyes and stilled her young heart. Brow, lip, and throat were congealed with a waxen whiteness; her hands were folded with a natural clasp, on her softly rounded bosom; she was dressed for the grave — ready for the coffin. He bent and kissed her, then shivering at the chill of the unanswering lips, he turned away in the extremest anguish, and bowing his head on his clasped hands, sat on the bedside and moaned her name, as if he were calling her back to him.

Meanwhile the servant had again been summoned to the door. A well-dressed man stood holding a bright-faced intelligent-looking boy by the hand.

"This is Mr. Le Vaugn's I s'pose," said the man, urging the boy within by drawing him forward.

"Yes, sir; but the master is in trouble, and wouldn't wish to see anybody; he's just lost his wife."

"Well, I don't know; he brought this boy to me early this morning, before I had opened my store in fact, and said, says he, 'Brown' — I'm his tailor — 'fit this boy to a decent suit of clothes, and as soon as he's ready take him down to my house;' which I did, according to the letter of the law — and here he is, regularly fitted out; new hat, new clothes, new boots, thirty dollars, and here's the bill."

"Well, I'm sure — I — I couldn't say, sir — I couldn't disturb Mr. Le Vaugn now, sir — I — s'pose it's all right, and I'll tell him by and by," stammered the well-bred housemaid.

"Never mind about telling him," returned Mr. Brown, "jest you take the boy in charge; clothes fit him very well; don't you think so, ma'am? go with her, little boy. I dare say it's all right; sorry for Mr. Le Vaugn, very sorry; give him my compliments; good-day," and the dapper little tailor with more rattle than brains, ran lightly down the steps, and began whistling an opera air as he sauntered off. His business done he forgot that a man's dead wife lay within the compass of his voice; his wife was living, how could he realize another's sorrow?

Left with the boy, the good girl did not know what to do with him, for a moment. Nick stood awkwardly fingering his new clothes, first



eyeing himself and then Martha, and casting shy glances round the spacious hall, one foot turned over the other.

"I guess you may come into the kitchen with me for a little while, till Mr. Le Vaughn comes down-stairs," at last she said, kindly, and Nick, who, now that he was dressed, bore himself with not a little conscious grace and erectness, marched in after her, holding his head very high.

"Sit down here," said Martha, as she ushered him into a handsome apartment, with shining floor and windows, and quantities of bright utensils hung in conspicuous places.

Nick seated himself in a large chair, wondering what made the lady so gracious to him, who had received nothing since he could remember but kicks and cuffs, and coarse commands uttered with threats and menaces. Nothing looked familiar to him, save the huge clock that ticked in one corner, standing in solemn majesty as it had stood for three generations, and seeming for all the world as if it had marched out of the old inn kitchen, and got here a little before him. The cook, an old German woman, was just tying on her apron as she came in; she peered over her spectacles, took them off, put them on again, and sauntered slowly out of the kitchen into her own particular province, casting glances at Nick as she went.

"Are you going to stay here, little fellow?" asked Martha, taking her sewing, and seating herself beside him.

"I guess I am," replied Nick, timidly; and then gathering courage, he added, "I like this house."

"Yes, it's a fine house, but there ain't never been much happiness in it, I guess," replied Martha, talking to herself rather than to him; "at any rate, it's a sorrowful house now the poor dear creature has gone to heaven, I hope. She clean mourned herself to death for that stolen child. What is your name, little boy?"

"My name is Nick; but Mr Le Vaughn, he says, I'm to be called George Henry Le Vaughn; he's going to adopt me," he added, proudly, pulling down his new blue jacket, and pushing the black curls from his forehead.

"Going to adopt you. Well, I never! What in the world is he going to do with you, and he without a wife. Why, child, you didn't know, nor he didn't know, before you came here, that his wife is lying cold up-stairs, poor lady!"

"Will he send me away, then?" asked Nick, anxiously, a cloud settling on his brow; "'cause I can't never find my way back to old Job Goodale, and if I did they wouldn't keep me, they was so mad 'cause I come away. Mastey was good, though," he added.

"No, no; that ain't like Mr. Le Vaughn," said Martha, resuming her work with a dubious look. "Like's not he'll settle some strange body over the house — oh, dear!" and with a long, deep sigh, the good Martha suspended her sewing, folded her hands, and gazed on vacancy.

It was very still there. Only the dull rumbling of distant wheels fell faintly on the ear, and the thick beat of the clock struck monoto-



nously. Nick felt a sensation of awe creeping over him from head to foot, as he sat calculating the chances of his being retained, watching Martha as she mused.

He grew quite at home during the progress of the forenoon, and relapsing into his old crouching attitude, with his hands hugging his knees, and his new cap most tenderly hanging from them, he went through with his whole history from the time he could remember.

Martha sat listening with unabated interest, and wondering at times why she heard no signs of life up-stairs.

Martha and Nick were still busily talking, when Miss Celeste Le Vaugn, one of two female cousins who lived with Le Vaugn, and who were his only living relatives in America, entered the kitchen.

"Who is this little boy, Martha?" asked Celeste.

"Your uncle brought him home, Miss Celeste, and accordin' to what he says, he will stay here," replied Martha.

"Oh he'll make him his printer's devil, I suppose," said the girl, carelessly; "I wonder if he knows about the city. Can you go to John Lake's straw-shop for me, little fellow?"

"He never was in the city before — he don't know nothing about Philadelphia," replied Martha; "if you'll wait till I set the table, I'll go for you."

"Oh, that's a kind creature, Martha, I'm sure; if you'll just ask Mrs. Swan, the scrowoman, you know, if my black Navarino is finished, and if she'll send it with her bill, I'll be ever so much obliged to you," and Celeste left the kitchen.

"If you'd like to go with me, little boy, you may," said Martha, as she stood shawled and bonneted, after getting all things in readiness for the dinner to be served up.

Nick assented with boyish alacrity, and the two wended their way into the streets. To the boy's eyes, unaccustomed to such sights, every object was a wonder; he seemed walking in dreamland. The splendors in the windows, the toys, and various merchandise of which he did not know the meaning, the books and pictures, the gayly-clad children, the various equipages, the great dwellings, and the market displays of autumn fruits, bewildered and yet delighted him. Martha could scarcely keep him by her side; at one time he would spring almost under some horses' head, at another he was dragged by some counter-current of humanity far behind her, and on his rescue merely gave a dubious stare, and run into another fresh difficulty so that when they arrived at John Lake's, the good woman, out of breath, declared she had rather do a day's work than drag a fresh importation through the city streets. A long and narrow store was that wherein the worthy Quaker transacted business; his work-room led from a side-door into a lofty, well-ventilated apartment, at different points of which sat from twelve to fourteen women, from the ages of fifteen to twenty-five, busily employed in sorting, softening, sewing, and plaiting the glittering straws. At the head of this room sat a woman, apparently of middle-age, dressed in a gray gown, like a Friend, with a muslin kerchief folded over her neck and bosom, a



plain cap, differing only from Quaker simplicity by the addition of a deep bordered frill, a low, broad forehead, over which was passed a black ribbon, underneath which a narrow edge of silvery hair was just visible. Mrs. Swan was a remarkable woman. Her face was fresh and fair almost as youth; her lips, which she compressed constantly, must have been at no very recent time round and ruddy; a faint color yet dyed her cheeks, and her low forehead was free from wrinkles. Thoughtful and serene in countenance, her very attitude was an embodiment of womanly dignity. Her hands, small and delicate, were nearly covered with the long, plaited ruffles of her sleeve at the wrist. An atmosphere of singular purity seemed to surround her — her calm, deep, dark eye, remarkable only for a concentration of light, that pierced as it looked through the outward manifestation into the hidden spirit of the act, made one, in her presence, truthful in spite of himself. It seemed as if she were guarded and hedged about from all contaminating influences. The young ladies in the store revered her as if she were a parent, and came to her with all their struggles, sure of the sympathy of her great, strong, and hopeful heart. And it was not strange, under her eye as they had many of them been for several years, that they were all quiet, thoughtful, and modest in manner and apparel. The work-room of John Lake was in fact a veritable school of morals, and the parent who could place one of her daughters under the superintendence of Mrs. Swan, felt that she was, humanly speaking, safe from the perils that threaten the young in great cities. Martha, who seemed to know the forewoman, went immediately up to the little table, upon which, paper and pen in hand, Mrs. Swan seemed to have been casting accounts, and delivered her message, still holding Nick by the hand. Nick, by the way, was creating a little diversion for himself. His big, round eyes, revolved with a rapidity of motion that set the young ladies to laughing, and he, noways disconcerted, laughed back again, as though he was mightily tickled at the notice taken of him. Mrs. Swan, rising to attend to the order, perceived the boy, and paused with a mute look of inquiry toward Martha.

“He doesn’t belong to me, ma’am, nor any of mine,” replied Martha, drawing him nearer to her side, and directing his attention to Mrs. Swan.

The latter regarded him fixedly and mournfully, then with a sigh and a springing tear, turned away, and, after a moment’s delay, placed a light package and a bill in Martha’s hand, with a request that the young lady would return it early, if there were any alterations to be made.

“Has thee seen Horace Le Vaughn since he returned?” asked the Quaker, John Lake, now coming forward. “How does thee do, my little fellow?” he added, taking Nick by the hand.

“Yes, sir, but only once,” replied Martha, “early this morning; indeed, sir, it was a hard blow for the poor man.”

The forewoman turned hastily toward her little table; an unwonted flush was in her cheeks, a sharp, quick flash in her eyes, and then she



was as calm as ever. The flush faded, her eyes were intent upon her work; Martha and the old Quaker, still talking, moved slowly toward the door. A pretty girl came up to the forewoman with a quantity of split straws. Mrs. Swan examined them minutely, while the girl chatted.

"Didn't you think that was a handsome little fellow that was here just now?" she said.

"He was a fine, bright boy," replied the forewoman.

"I noticed his eyes particularly, because they were so exactly the color of yours. I never saw any one before that had your eyes."

"Mary!" exclaimed Mrs. Swan, in a faint but deprecating voice, and her cheek had grown deadly pale. Commanding herself a moment after, she added, coldly, "take your work again, my child."

The girl lingered, with a troubled look.

"Have I offended you?" she asked timidly.

"No," replied the forewoman, "you never offended me in your life, my dear."

Her voice was very calm and soft, but the folds of her drab dress, and the gauze of her neck-handkerchief rose and fell, as if deep feeling was agitating that apparently passionless heart. The girl took her seat — the buzz and hum of the work-room, the rustling of straws, the clicking of sharp blades, the tying of fluttering ribbons went on, and the stately forewoman sat, one hand occupied with a pen, which glided with an absent motion on the paper before her, the other supporting her cheek. All that day she was thoughtful, pale, and silent — the girls wondered at her mood.

Home again, Martha gave Nick a book of pictures, and helped the German cook dish up the dinner.

"Oh, dear! I wish anybody could get any reason into uncle," cried Celeste, bursting into the dining-room, while the rest of the family followed more slowly. "He's up in the parlor walking, walking, up and down, back and forth, and his face and eyes look like stone; I declare he frightens me to death; he won't speak to anybody, he won't let anybody come near him, he's refused his best friends admittance all the morning; he'll just go crazy, I know he will — he looks just like it — and then he'll kill us all, like's not."

"If you will attend to the table, Miss Celeste," said Martha, calmly, "I'll go up-stairs: it ain't much I can say, but perhaps it may make him feel better."

Martha went up stairs slowly, with eyes half closed, and lips moving; she was seeking strength where she had never sought in vain. The door of the great parlor was closed: Martha knocked timidly. Tramp, tramp, sounded the foot-steps of the bereaved husband. All was hushed silence, save that dismal tread, and no one opened the door. Presently the girl ventured within; Le Vaughn walked on without looking at her. His face had grown gray and old, and almost attenuated, by his morning's bitter sorrow; he seemed not to know that another stood within the sound of his footsteps, or, if he knew, to care.



"She was very happy when she died, sir."

He turned as if stung, as he exclaimed, "Happy! who?"

"Because she was a christian," said Martha in a low voice. "She became very happy at the last. God was merciful sir."

"You speak riddles to me — a Christian! What had she to be a Christian for? because God took away her first-born, her health, her happiness, her life?"

"We have no right to question God," said Martha, meekly.

"I wish I felt so," said Le Vaugn, bitterly.

"I wish you did feel so," replied Martha, low and softly, "perhaps it would be better if I said, I wish you may," she added.

Some impious speech rose to the lips of the mourner, but struggling with himself, he repressed it, and with another effort, he came close to Martha, and said, in tones so hollow that she trembled as he spoke, "They say that you were with her; sit down, and tell me all about it, from the first to the last."

Martha sat down, thought for a moment as she clasped and unclasped her fingers, and then began, with abstracted vision: "She took the sickest on last Tuesday morning. All that day she didn't get up. Then the doctor, when he came, seemed as much astonished as anybody; he couldn't account for the change that had come so quick; and she made him tell her how dangerous she was, and that, sir, I think, hastened her end. That night I watched with her. She was very wakeful, and talked a good deal with me; she talked beautifully about you, and about her lost child, and every thing. She said she didn't think she should ever see you in this world again." Martha's voice failed her for a moment, and her eyes overran great drops of grief.

"Well, sir," continued Martha, clearing her voice, "I shall never forget that night — the words grew tremulous — nor the next day — for she was sweet, and smiling, and patient as a saint. Once she called me and said 'I see an angel on this side of me;' that was the right, you know — and says she, 'don't you see how bright her wings are? Isn't the Lord good to comfort me so?' Well, she fell into a little doze after that, and as I stood over her, her eyes opened suddenly, and they shone so brightly, I was frightened; and, oh, sir! what do you think she exclaims? 'I —' the good creature, overcome by her feelings, paused to sob a little, and to wipe the overflowing tears from her eyes — and then in a faltering, broken voice, she went on, 'I've seen my lost child, Martha!' Oh, how solemn she spoke! to my last days I never can forget what a chill it sent all over me. Says I, 'Dear, are you surely awake?' 'I surely am, Martha — I'm not dreaming. I'm not out of my senses — I've been to my lost child, and seen her — and — I'm satisfied. The will of my Heavenly Father be done!' This was just at half-past two — I remember that, because the clock had stopped only a few moments before at nearly half past. I wanted to be certain, and so says I, 'It was a beautiful dream, dear.' 'Dream, Martha!' says she, so solemnly, that my blood grew cold, 'God gave me power



to go to her ; it wasn't any dream,' said she, 'I saw her and knew her — and she saw me, and knew me, and cried out to come to me — but at that moment I was back again with you, Martha.' 'And was she well, and in good hands?' I asked — for I couldn't help feeling that somehow she knew all about it — but she only grieved a little, and wouldn't answer me. Oh ! it made me feel so " — and Martha burst into a wild cry, and sobbed for a moment uncontrollably. 'Forgive me, sir,' she said, afterward, wiping her eyes hurriedly with her apron — "but you told me to tell you all."

"Go on."

The word: sounded like a knell — so hollow and sepulchral.

"Well, sir, I saw she was sinking, and I asked her if she had anything to leave for you, and she said, 'My love, all my earthly love — tell him I loved him to the last ; tell him I will love him in heaven.'"

"Oh !" he cried, bursting into tears, "oh, my wife — my wife !" and he wept as only he who deems it weakness weeps when tears will no longer be repressed.

"It was four in the afternoon that she died, sir. Our neighbor was by the bed, the nurse, and the rest were standing about the room. 'Martha,' said she, and she gave me a look out of those dying eyes, 'if our dear little child is ever found, promise me you will be a mother to her.' 'I will — I will !' said I, as well as I could for crying, for I thought my heart would break to lose her ; and then she said again, 'Martha !' I got closer to her lips, for I knew she was going as steadily as the sun goes down, 'tell my dear husband God is merciful — I want him to come where I am going — dear Horace,' and saying that twice, with your name on her lips, she died. That is all, sir."

And Martha rose to go. As she opened the door, a noise, as of disputing, was heard in the hall. John, the butler, was striving to prevent the ingress of some person outside. Martha stepped to the door. A woman of dark visage, respectably but coarsely dressed, held the door firmly with one hand, declaring that she must and would enter ; and, with a vigorous movement, she ensconced herself within.

"I want to see the lady, if I can't see the master," she said, locking her firm lips together, and pushing her coal-black hair farther under her bonnet.

"Wretched woman," said Le Vaugn, "do you come to desecrate the bed of death ! Yes, go up — go see where you have laid her."

Awed by his manner, the Indian woman moved slowly up the stairs, and into the chamber where lay the corpse. Surveying it for a moment, she turned to Le Vaugn, as she said with shaking voice and hands outstretched,

"I have walked since last Wednesday, foot sore, and taking no rest, that I might see *her* alive. You told me that she was dying, I had a message to give her. But what am I here for ? What am I in this chamber for, with your dead wife ? To tell you I haven't a tear to shed for you," she continued, drinking in the sight of his



almost writhing madness with greedy eye. Wasn't my child modest, Le Vaughn? Didn't she blush and crouch against the wall at the words of admiration, at the free glances? Did you ever see one of my tribe whose cheek didn't burn if you but looked at her? Answer me — did the Indian maid forget her virtue till your accursed arts had taught her to shun the mother who had guarded her with all her care and love? Suffer! — suffer! God knows you deserve this, wolf-hound — night-prowler — there! you needn't call for anybody to come and put me out — if I had a mind I could strangle you, and nobody the wiser; but I tell you, the Great Spirit *will* avenge the wrongs of my white swan — if He don't, I will."

She looked about at the shaded magnificence of the room — she gazed long at the motionless form of the dead — she glanced again with a bitter smile toward the now prostrate Le Vaughn — turned and left the chamber and the house.

The funeral solemnities were celebrated with great pomp — the body of the fair and gentle wife was laid in Le Vaughn's tomb, and the stricken man returned to his silent home, bowed and broken in spirit. He sat alone, as he had sat all day, with the exception of the time taken in going to the graveyard. A rap at the door disturbed him, and Martha entered, bringing Nick with her.

"Thank you, Martha, I had forgotten him entirely," and as he looked again at the boy's bright young face, a painful thought seemed to strike him; he shook his head impatiently — motioned Martha to go out, and after she had gone, bowed his head on his hand, taking no further notice of the child, who gathered himself up on a low seat, and sat in his old unchildish way all the long evening, till Le Vaughn, worn out with his gloomy thoughts, retired to rest taking Nick with him.

## CHAPTER VII.

PARK DINSMORE AND VAN ALSTYNE MEET MOTHER KURSTEGAN —  
MORE CONCERNING CHIP.

VAN ALSTYNE and Park Dinsmore arrived in the city at the same time with Le Vaughn, and proceeded, arm in arm, carpet-bags in hand, to the precincts of the post office, where sat, in a four seated wagon, Gray, the venerable serving-man of the Dinsmore family, looking warily about him, and glancing under an enormous pair of shell-rimmed spectacles at all the passers-by. One would have taken the old man for a clergyman, by his meek face and white queue, his light neckcloth and superannuated broadcloth.

"I say, Gray, how are you, my dear old friend? — and how is mother, and how are the folks, and how is old Wissahiecon?"



All this Park said before the slow old man had time to articulate a word, and while helping Van Alstyne to his place. Then he jumped in himself, and struck the butler heartily but respectfully on the shoulder. By this time the latter had recovered his faculties sufficiently to reply to his queries, and the horse rattled on through the noisy streets, coming soon to the road leading into the open country. Beguiling the time by pleasant chat, and a vigorous enjoyment of the Autumn scenery, expressed by exuberant language, and a free, joyous laughter, the carriage in an hour rolled along by the beautiful Wissahiccon, and soon drew up before a stately mansion on the outskirts of Germantown. An avenue, lined by magnificent chestnut-trees, led to a smooth, level lawn, dotted with many trees.

Not far from the house the bold heights of surrounding hills, crowded thickly with hemlock, spruce, and cedar, rose with quiet majesty, while laurels and pines covered the lesser slopes. The calm of a clear sky hung over all, and the great house looked almost solemn in the silence, surrounded as it was with heavily foliaged trees. Quiet brooded on the bosom of the misty silver stream; beauty reveled on the dreamy lowlands, and on the sunbeam-spotted hills and fields and cottage homes.

Ascending wide, moss-covered steps of brown stone, the youth and his maturer friend entered the great door.

"This is my mother, Mr. Van Alstyne — a friend, mother, who has been traveling with me."

"You are very welcome," said the sweet-voiced, graceful lady, turning from her son's embrace with one white, outstretched hand to the professor.

"Now, Van Alstyne, come right up to my room; ah, I see your speculative eye is roving already over these curious things — mother, you can't think what a mineral-hunting, specimen-seeking creature it is!"

"My son, be respectful — he's a wild boy, Mr. Van Alstyne," she added, while a mother's pride shone in her eye.

The hall was very large, old-fashioned, and anciently furnished. The lights above and at the sides of the door were richly stained. Hunting pictures hung in the lower section, cases of birds and stuffed animals were ranged at different points. The staircase was broad, massive, and surmounted with a balustrade elaborately carved; the upper part of the hall was divided into galleries, ornamented with old family pictures and relics, and surrounded with beautiful lattice-work, that took all hues from the gorgeously stained circular window at the head of the staircase. From the gallery several rooms opened, and into one of these, small and richly furnished, Professor Van Alstyne was ushered by Park.

"Now, I will leave you till you are through with your toilet," said the latter, "*au revoir*."

"By the way, there's the remnant of a tribe of Indians six miles off from here, suppose we take horses and ride there, it will be worth our while."



It wanted yet two hours of twilight. The atmosphere, dry and clear, braced their nerves with its exhilarating tone, and a slight wind ruffled the bosom of the Wissahiccon. For a while the road led along the banks of the river, keeping the breezy hill-tops in view from the opposite side. Then from this path they diverged into long village-streets, now winding around the base of a romantic height, now down a narrow lane, and soon entering a wood, cantered through till they came to a spot of clearing, where withered leaves, sticks, rags and ashes gave token of degraded human life.

"Upon my word they are all gone," exclaimed Park, with an appearance of chagrin; "there's where the tents were," he continued, pointing to different localities; "it's too bad, really; we've had our ride for nothing."

"Look here to the right, Dinsmore," said Van Alstyne, "do you see a smoke — there between these trees?"

Not far from them the ground sloped into a small hollow filled with bushes, and interspersed with young trees. From the center of this a smoke was ascending in thick clouds. Moving cautiously towards the place, Park looked down, and returning half way, for Van Alstyne had followed him, he whispered —

"It is old Mother Kurstegan, as truly as you live; she has just cooked a dinner, and now sits eating it in solitary grandeur. Would you venture to invade her domestic sanctum?"

"Yes," returned Van Alstyne, "perhaps we can draw her out. What a strange form her insanity takes she always seems hunting some one with remorseless cruelty."

"Good day, mother," said Park, carefully footing his way through the tangled underbrush, "we came out to have a little friendly talk with the Indians, but find them gone."

"Gone — ay, truly, truly, gone — gone — forever!" she repeated, laying aside the fragments of her meal, and slowly rising to her feet. "I say," continued she, "have you seen a child in your wanderings? I thought, you know, that perhaps you *might* have found one, starved to death, under some hedge or other; I merely thought, as such things do occur sometimes — a small child with blue eyes and light hair," she added, with a manner of real anxiety, as she looked from one face to the other, "a delicate child, that hadn't been used to hardship, but been, oh! so tenderly, so tenderly brought up! Light as the thistle-down she was — if either of you gentlemen had lifted her, you wouldn't have known that you had any thing in your arms at all."

"Whose child was it?" Park quietly asked.

The black eyes blazed and flashed as she turned to him; then folding her arms, she said, stolidly —

"That's none of your business! I saw such a child, and knew such a child, and have searched night and day —" she paused to control herself, then added — "I suppose she is somewhere among our Indians — gone farther West; I shall follow after them," and she commenced singing in a plaintive tone:



"Dead and buried,  
 Ocharoke,  
 Under leaves  
 Of pine and oak!  
 Winds shall lull thee,  
 Rivers run by thee,  
 Birds fly over thee,  
 Grass grow above thee;  
 Flowers at the head,  
 Arrows at the foot,  
 Water for drink,  
 For meat the root—  
 Dead and buried,  
 Ocharoke,  
 Under leaves  
 Of pine and oak."

She hastened away, leaving the youth and the young professor thoughtful and quiet.

"Do you see how the weather has changed?" asked Van Alstyne, suddenly, pointing to the sky.

"Rain, rain, in torrents, as sure as you live; Mother Kurstegan, they say, commands the elements; for wherever she goes it rains!" cried Park, as the two remounted their horses.

"She is an adroit student of the weather-signs, I suppose," replied Van Alstyne; "you remember I predicted rain this noon; I wonder I forgot it; now we must hasten, or we shall get wet to the skin."

The clouds gave down their fullness before they reached home, but safely housed, with dry garments exchanged for their wet ones, Park and his friend enjoyed the raving of the wind and the unbroken beat of the heavy rain as it struck the dry earth. They had not long sat there, listening to Mrs. Dinsmore's sweet voice as she sang, through Park's entreaty, when the door opened, and Gray, the butler, entered, and said, with a respectful air, that the old gentleman saw a lady out in the storm, under the large elm, and could not his daughter send some one to conduct her to a shelter.

"Certainly, Gray; take an umbrella and go immediately; whoever it is, she should not stay in this drenching rain," said Mrs. Dinsmore, rising as she spoke, and the old servant disappeared.

In a few moments he was seen with a girlish figure leaning on his arm.

"Poor thing! she looks exhausted," said Mrs. Dinsmore, pityingly, "and her clothes have been no protection. I shall have her brought right in here; Park, take your friend into the drawing room."

While the two were passing out, the old butler was just entering the hall, supporting his fair burden, who was almost insensible from chillness and fatigue. As her eyes met those of Van Alstyne, she appeared for a moment overcome with embarrassment—the blood surged to her white cheeks, her eyes fell; she tremblingly put back the long curling masses of dark hair that had become unbound, and as she was assisted into the sitting-room, she fainted away.

Van Alstyne answered Park's inquiries in a vague, absent way; his mind was busied with a thousand conjectures. Why was this young



girl, his pupil, wandering away so far from her residence? There had ever been a mystery surrounding her. Young, handsome, and alone; fresh and marvelous in her beauty, yet never mingling in society, though capable of being its ornament; applying herself resolutely and untiringly to the most difficult studies, and conquering them with wonderful ease.

At the supper-table Mrs. Dinsmore told them that the stranger was sick, in consequence of exposure, and, she thought, great anxiety of mind. She said, also, that she sometimes wandered, and her supplications to her mother were heart-rending, adding —

“I wish I could get some clue to her name or family.”

“I think I could assist you, madam,” said Van Alstyne, blushing like a girl as he spoke, and casting his fine eyes down — “she happens to be a pupil of mine,” he went on, “her name is Leoline, and her especial protector is John Lake, the Quaker straw-merchant; perhaps you know him.”

Mrs. Dinsmore signified that she did, and would send Gray with a message to him in the morning.

“I shall be happy to serve you,” said Van Alstyne, “as I go home to-morrow.”

“Not so soon, I hope,” said Mrs. Dinsmore.

“My duties, madam, do not admit of longer delay, or I know of no place where I could spend my time more delightfully,” answered Van Alstyne.

The compliment was gracefully acknowledged. At that moment Mrs. Dinsmore was called from the table into the sick room. On a couch lay the girl, her slender form enveloped in a dressing-gown, her long hair lightly bound, coiled about her temples, her face, that had been flushed now white and pallid. She was calm, though very weak, and as the kind lady entered, she held out her hand saying —

“Forgive me for this trespass upon your hospitality; I am subject to fever, and the thorough wetting I received has brought on this sudden attack. I have friends in Philadelphia, who will remove me as soon as they know of my illness — I walked too far,” she added, faintly smiling; “I am not used to walking; I am,” she faltered, “in search of a long-lost friend.”

Mrs. Dinsmore with true delicacy, forebore to question her just then — she drew the curtain closer; the rain yet drove heavily against the pane, though the shower was subsiding.

It was a darkened room, and the footfalls were light, the words spoken in whispers. The doctor stood at the head of the couch, his wife knelt at his side. Chip lay in a death-like slumber, her hands disposed upon her bosom. The doctor's wife looked up frequently with a mute, appealing glance in her husband's face; his eyes were intent upon the child. One would scarce see the moving of her night-dress that lay over her form like a shroud — she was so still. There



was no sound in the room, not even the sound of her breathing, the breath went and came so lightly. The portrait of the little child on the wall seemed instinct with pitying life, as its mild eyes gazed down on the sleeper. The deepest anxiety was pictured upon the faces of the doctor and his wife, for the crisis had come. For three days they had cared for her so tenderly! She must not die. How they had fanned and cherished the little spark of life! How they had watched the fever glitter in her eyes, and counted the faint pulse! How often they had smoothed the silken hair! and what sweet words they had murmured in her ear! How impressively dear it had become even in that time to feel the presence of a little child in the house — she must not die. An hour had passed, and the doctor cautiously took out his watch, looking alternately at it and the child. A glad smile illumined his earnest face as he whispered — “We shall save her.” With a mute pressure of the hands together, his wife lifted her tearful eyes; she was very happy, very thankful.

Chip came out of her slumber, and with a faint moan opened her eyes. There was nothing cruel around her; no harsh, unfeeling Mrs. Snackskin, no rude boy or thoughtless girl to torment her into a fever, but instead a pair of the sweetest, mildest brown eyes, and lips that, softly as rose-leaves, touched her brow, pale with the pressure of disease; and another face, frank and sunny with the hope light that had come back to its noble features, and cheerful tones that said, “Well, my little lady-bird, we must take good care of you.”

Chip lay in a delicious, dream-like repose, scarcely conscious of existence, and she took the delicate nourishment from the fair hands that proffered it, and faintly smiled.

The next day Chip was better, and the next and the next. Gradually her strength returned, and she lay bolstered up by pillows, her glances perpetual questions. The doctor's wife made her a beautiful toy and gave it to her. She gazed at it with pleased surprise, then laid it down as if the effort had used up all the wonder she was capable of feeling just then. Pictures were brought; a red flush sprang to either cheek as she looked at them, and she astonished the good people by crying out, as she feebly clapped her hands — “Oh! the princes, the kings with crowns, and the beautiful angels!” then starting, she sank shyly back and was silent again, only speaking with her great, expressive eyes.

Very soon Chip began to walk about. Her strange wonder at the different articles of furniture, her simple questions betraying such an entire lack of the commonest knowledge pertaining to childhood, astonished her kind protectors. But she evidenced a remarkable facility for acquiring, and a hunger after knowledge, that gave sufficient encouragement for her future. She was childishly delighted with her beautiful clothes, and appeared to great advantage in them.

Chip, named by her new protectors, Lena, after the dead child, exhibited some trepidation when told that she was to go on a journey. She became very restless, looking eagerly from the window across the distant hills, and frequently sighing in an unnatural way.



"My little girl does not want to go back to her home in the cave, does she?" asked the doctor's wife, one day, kissing her affectionately.

Chip shook her head, but her eyes, now mournful, were filled with tears.

"You love me, don't you, Lena?" asked Mrs. Angell again, as the child laid her head on her bosom. An affirmative nod was the only answer, except that the little girl clung closer to her friend.

"Then what makes you so sad and silent, my child?"

"I don't know," was the mournful reply.

Solitude and austerity, combined with a system of intellectual torture, had almost done their work in the case of this poor child. Her imagination had grown morbid, her affections constrained, her manners irresolute. She had little childish love of pleasure; naturally, her mind had been nervous and vigorous, the ideal predominating. But, thwarted and distorted, it had fallen apparently to the level of a merely infantile capacity, and with the faculties of eleven years she had scarcely the endowments possessed usually by children of seven.

But the mind was there; Mother Kurstegan's wild traditions and poetic delineations, terrible as they sometimes were, had yet fallen upon rich soil. The old woman had taught her to read, by means of letters made on birch bark, and in a rude way, to draw, also. Still the doctor's wife was puzzled to know by what process to call out the instincts, the natural traits of this child. Toys did not interest her — conversation wearied her — but the measured rhythm of poetry and music set her eyes sparkling, and pictures delighted her. Through these two mediums the tender woman determined to develop the resources of her now nearly unawakened intellect. With these keys she would unlock the imprisoned mind, and perchance find jewels there worthy a glorious setting. Much depended upon the manner of imparting instruction, and the society of other children. She must be accustomed to see childish company; her tastes and casual preferences must be skillfully managed, in order to aid in her development.

Established in their city home, the training was put in process. Masters were procured who were competent to invoke the slumbering talent, if but the germ were there. Nor did the means fail of a result that far surpassed the expectations of the good doctor and his wife. The pale, timid little child grew blooming and graceful; her body expanded as her mentality became more vigorous. She began to display genius; erratic at first — almost ludicrous in its crudeness. It was evident that a mine of wealth had been hidden in the neglected soil — and by the use of fitting instrumentalities it began to glitter here and there beneath the surface. Her voice was like a lute.

"She will astonish us, some day," said her music-master to Mrs. Angell; "I never saw such an original."

This was at the first. It would take much time to measure the breadth and depth of her mind's resources. The doctor and his



wife were satisfied that God had given them so wonderful a mind to develope. Every day some new and brilliant gift became apparent. Which would she be? — a poet, painter, or singer? Already, when by herself, she improvized unusual airs. If she saw a striking picture or an engraving, she would often say —

“I feel as if *I* made that,” and then, with a solemn voice and look, she would add, “may-be I *shall* do something like that, some day.”

The recitation of a poem would fill her with strange rapture. Her deep eyes grew luminous; her breath was suspended; her cheek paled and flushed till often the book was laid by from the very pain of sympathy, and she would sit long afterwards, perhaps tearful and abstracted. Gradually the memory of her earlier life grew less vivid, but she often sprang, sobbing, from her sleep, and then it required great tenderness and tact to soothe her.

But let me take my reader back to the time of the burial of Le Vaughn's wife.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### FRIEND REBECCA COMFORTS LEOLINE.

“Can I walk there in three hours?”

So mused the occupant of the old Hantz house, on Arch street, as she sat with folded hands and dragging head before the little grate. One dim taper burning on the shelf, made a quivering circle of light round the fair, bowed head, and the red halo of the little fire, threw its reflected crimson full in her face. It was hardly cold enough for a fire, but the room was lofty and large, and would have seemed gloomy without it. The occupant appeared to be a young girl of eighteen years, but in reality she was already past twenty-four. Dressed modestly, in a gray garb that encircled her slender throat and the sleeves of which were gathered and fastened at the wrist, her dark hair loosely thrown from her forehead, around which it stood, in a wavy twist like a coronet; the woman, soft in feature, and of great grace of attitude, was eminently prepossessing. It needed not the pensive posture and the thoughtful eye to tell, that young as she was, she had yet seen much sorrow. The very repose of her features, the subdued manner, the lips that never smiled, were sufficient indications. The little piano was closed, and did not seem to have been opened for several days. The books on the table drawn to the center of the room, were shut. Solitary and alone in the midst of a great, tenantless house, sat the mysterious protege of John Lake, the Quaker preacher.

“Can I walk there in three hours?” she murmured, evidently



calculating the distance to some place outside the city limits — and then she added, “I will go to-morrow.”

There was a little tap on the door.

“Come in,” she said, just loudly enough to be heard, and then starting, exclaimed, “wait, I had forgotten.”

Taking a key from her pocket, she came toward the door and opened it. A tall figure in a drab cloak, the hood of which was drawn over her head, entered, and depositing a little lantern on the nearest chair, laid both hands on the brow of the younger, and drawing her forehead toward her, imprinted a kiss upon it.

“Brother hath been telling me of thy disquietude to-day,” said the Quaker-sister, seating herself, and throwing her hood off a face from which the lily and the rose had not yet faded; then smoothing back her soft light hair, and tucking it circumspectly under her cambric cap, she added, “he told me at our tea, I had better call and see thee, for he feared some harm had happened to thee.”

“Oh! Rebecca, I am very unhappy, very miserable, very wretched,” said the young woman, with quivering lip.

“If thee has no new trouble, thee is grieving the Spirit, dear child,” said the Quaker tenderly.

“But I have a new trouble, friend Rebecca,” said the young woman; “or rather the old one has come up afresh — oh!” and she began to wipe the tears that streamed down her cheeks.

“Does, then, the sorrow of that reprobate affect thy heart?” asked the Quaker, mildly, but with a shade of reproach in her voice.

“No, no, I feel nothing but the greatest abhorrence for his duplicity, though God help me to pity his meanest creature, in the time of affliction. Mr. Le Vaughn is as one dead, in my memory; I had forgotten him — I hope I had,” she added, in a lower tone. “But, oh! Rebecca, I have heard from my poor mother, and I cannot eat nor sleep till I see her, and make one more attempt to obtain her forgiveness!”

“How did thee hear?”

“Casually, through one of the shop-girls. I knew my poor mother by her description; she has gone to Germantown, where there is an encampment of Indians, to find — *his* child,” she shivered as she spoke. “They knew nothing of it, of course, but I conjecture that the little girl has in some manner slipped out of her hands, and she is searching for her. At any rate, she suspected these wandering Indians of having stolen it; the girls laughed at it, and called it a crazy freak. They made merry over her language, her dress, little knowing how every word stabbed me to the heart. Rebecca, I must start to-morrow, and find my mother!”

“Thee is too delicate to walk so far,” said the Quaker, shaking her head, doubtfully. “Thee had better let me speak to brother, and —”

“Oh, no, no!” cried the young woman, breaking in upon her. “don’t tell him; pray don’t; nobody must know it; I must go *alone*, every thing depends upon my being left to act in my own way, and follow my own impressions.”



"Thee is at perfect liberty," said the Quaker mildly, "I only thought of thy womanly strength; thee has not made thyself strong in all these years."

"Dear, dear friend!" exclaimed the young woman, almost passionately; and falling at her feet, she covered her face in the folds of her dress.

"Humiliate not thyself, my child," said the Quaker, striving to lift her.

"Let me lie here in the dust, at the feet of one so pure and good," sobbed the girl, as she clung to her knees, "whose greatest purity and goodness have been displayed in her treatment of the erring and unfortunate."

"Child, child, thou shouldst not," said the Quakeress, greatly agitated, while a tear stood in her eye; "remember, we are all poor fallen creatures, and if either, thou art the better, having conquered through grace. Arise."

"Oh, let me stay here! I feel humble and hopeful, just as I am, on my knees before God and you! Thank you! your hand feels so soft and cool on my head!—oh, if my mother would but love me so! my own mother, who has cast me off!"

"Pray, pray," said the Quakeress, in low and tremulous tones.

"She was a good mother to me," sobbed the young woman, still hiding her face; "I think more and more of it, how good she was, and so refined, so rigid in her ideas of duty, so inflexible in her principles—oh, that I had been like her!"

"Thee was cruelly deceived, poor child!"

"You *do* believe, then; you believe all that I have told you?"

"Believe thee, truly; why should I doubt, my poor lamb?"

"That he went through the mockery of a marriage ceremony, and I thought I was his lawful wife. My grandfather was a chief, a king, and my father, though he was stern and unloving, came of a noble race; if only I had not listened to that false man, when he made me promise to act without the counsel of my mother, never had he wronged me. But, oh, poor man! his little child, his tender little infant, was stolen—stolen by my mother—I know it—her brain was turned by my desertion, and she stole his first-born in the marriage tie. That has made me pity him, because his wife was broken-hearted, and he, living in wealth, powerful though he is, and honored, suffers more than I!"

"My child, thee should not speak such bitter things against thyself. In that thou didst forget the counsels of her that bore thee, and gave her not thy confidence, thou didst sin; but in the matter of thy false wedding-vows, thou wert as blameless as an angel!"

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" cried Leoline Kurstegan, springing to her feet, the tears of grief and despair still glittering on her lashes; "you speak with such confidence that I feel better and stronger."

"Is it not time for thy teacher?" asked the Quakeress, rising as she spoke.

The girl's fair face grew crimson as she answered, turning towards



the fire, that he had gone away from the city, and might not yet be returned.

"He is a comely young man," said Rebecca, quietly, "and he is returned, for brother came with him but yesterday morning — Leoline. wouldst thou love him if he loved thee?"

The question was abruptly put; the young woman started, and the blood receded, leaving her paler than before. She stood for a moment, irresolute, her lips apart, then suddenly covering her eyes with both hands, she dropped her head, exclaiming, in an anguished voice :

"Don't ask me ! don't ask me !"

Rebecca stood in the dim light, a sad smile resting on her lips, and her figure seeming unnaturally tall in the gloom. The room was quite silent, the fire-light threw uneven shadows over the spectral walls, and made the girl's figure look wavering as she stood there in confusion and distress.

"Thee should not be afraid to love him," said Rebecca, lighting her lantern to go, "thee is as good as he — be happy my child; I wish thee a good night."

Moved by an impulse of tenderness, the lonely girl came forward, and throwing her arms over the neck of the Quakeress kissed her on either cheek.

"God bless thee, my child," said Rebecca, fervently, and drew her to her bosom ; "about this journey, must it be as thee says?"

"I shall go to-morrow," replied the other.

"God go with thee," repeated Rebecca, and left the room with a smile that made the heavy heart light. After preparing a few things for the morrow's journey, Leoline went into a little chamber adjoining, and with a sincere, heartfelt prayer, committing herself to God's care, retired to rest.

Perhaps the reader may ask how a woman of her youth and loveliness came to live in a large, isolated, forsaken tenement. I can only reply that she had no rent to pay, that she earned her own living, and was ambitious to excel as a scholar ; that many reasons, needless now to repeat, led her to seek solitude, and to shun the world around her. The old building was owned by Quaker John, hence her privilege of occupying the most habitable part ; his sister and herself lived only at the distance of a few squares, and the good Rebecca came in, sometimes, to cheer her solitude.

We have already seen Leoline upon a journey far too arduous for her strength, and prostrated at the house of Mrs. Dinsmore with a sudden fever. It was not to be wondered at that a creature so refined in manner and lovely in person should win the heart of that good lady forthwith. The sadness under which she labored gave rise to a series of conjectures which Mrs. Dinsmore was too innately noble to express in words, for fear of wounding the feelings of her guest.

On the following day, Park and the professor parted with many mutual regrets, the former promising to call on his next visit to the city, "which," said he, "may be as early as — this afternoon."



"I've found them," shouted Park, throwing open the window of his mother's sitting-room, "you must go and see them, mother; it will be worth your while."

"See what? What do you mean, my son?"

"Why, the Indians; they are encamped only a mile beyond the woods where we — Van Alstyne and I — went the other day; they have been detained by the sickness of their chief, and they will start day after to-morrow for the West; what say you, mother, to a ride out there to-morrow?"

"I have no objections," replied Mrs. Dinsmore pleasantly, turning to Leoline, who sat wrapped in a shawl, she said, seeing in her altered countenance, "Park, shut that window, my son; you are giving our young friend a chill." Then as the thoughtless fellow rattled down the sash, she added — "you would like to see this band of wandering Indians."

"Oh! if you knew!" exclaimed the young woman earnestly, "if you knew how much, and why I wish to see them! I will tell you," she added immediately, taking courage from the compassion evinced by the gentle face before her, "I have Indian blood in my veins; my mother is an Indian, the daughter of a chief. My father was an Englishman; you see I have his features and his complexion; my father was an officer in the English army; he educated my mother and married her. My father died when I was a child but seven years old, and my mother then came back to her native country. She has seen much misfortune — but — the greatest of all has been — the loss of her reason. An event — which plunged her in great affliction," continued the speaker, faltering, "happened some ten years ago. I was thrown upon the world, — and — I can not tell you — it distresses me — it kills me!" she exclaimed, bursting into tears.

"You need not; I divine the rest," said Mrs. Dinsmore, moved by sorrow; "your mother can not be controlled; she wanders over the country, and sometimes you hear of her whereabouts by chance, and as now, seek her and try to obtain an influence over her. But it is always so with those who labor under this misfortune, they turn away from the hand they have loved the best."

Before Leoline could reply, John Lake, the Quaker preacher, was announced. Leoline sprang to meet him, her cheeks flushing with a glad surprise. He sat down by her side, and, with fatherly interest, questioned her about her health, and gravely chid her for undertaking a journey so fatiguing alone. He gladly assented when invited to join "the Indian hunting-party," as Park named it, and was so chatty lively, and agreeable, that Park announced privately to his mother, that he was in the way to make one of the most interesting old fossils that could possibly be preserved. A gentle, chiding shake of the head, a pinch of the ruddy cheek and Mrs. Dinsmore told him to be silent, and be a good boy, which was invariably the extent of her chiding.

The next morning the party drove out to the Indian camping-ground. The spot which had been selected by the Indians was most



enchanted. By meadows and fields of late grain, rolling in glittering waves down the slopes of the hills, through patches of dark woods, the party drove, and ascending at last a gentle eminence, stopped upon a long reach of table-land, where now and then one giant-oak spread its broad foliage, sprinkled with the colors of the rainbow. The cloudless blue of an Indian-summer tinged the whole heavens, and even the tents, ragged and worn as they were, at a little distance looked white and glittering. Groups of Indians sat in the doors of their rude habitations, engaged some in mending their hunting-implements, some lazily sunning themselves, and many of the women making their interminable bead-work. They hardly stirred as the party alighted and came toward them. The chief's tent was the largest, resting at the back upon small stakes, and lifted in front by tall poles that gave it the appearance of a gable roof. The boughs of the neighboring wood had been rifled of their fresh, piny garments, and limbs of the evergreen lay from the ridge-pole, hanging over to the ground behind. The pine leaves strewed in front and within, on the mossy floor, gave an agreeable odor to the atmosphere though it was somewhat tainted by mingling with the smoke of the pipe.

Leoline, agitated, trembling in every limb, looked eagerly about to find some token of her mother's presence. Park, through his intercession, obtained an entrance into the tent of the chief for the whole company. A mellow light, checkered by the fine foliage of the primitive thatch, was shed all through the interior. On a bed of fine boughs, over which was thrown a blanket, rested the chief, an athletic man of middle age and of commanding presence. His squaw, an intelligent-looking woman, was pounding Indian corn in a rough-hewn tray, but, obeying the simple gesture of her lord, she put aside her work, and filling his pipe, lighted and presented it to him. With a gravity becoming his state, he held out the pipe to Park, who put it to his lips, then to the Quaker, next to Mrs. Dinsmore, and finally to Leoline, upon whom he seemed to look with as much admiration as an Indian allows himself to express. She, with shaking hand and a trembling lip, just touched the mouth-piece, and handed it back to him. Then ensued a long silence, in which the chief continued smoking, still with his eyes fixed on Leoline's face. The quiet became almost unendurable, and Leoline, by beseeching glances, urged first the Quaker, and then Park, to begin the conference. Both, however, knew the etiquette of the tribe too well to break the silence, and at last, blowing the smoke slowly upward, the chief exclaimed, in broken English —

“Me glad to see you.”

Upon this, Park drew from his pocket two strings of gaudily colored beads, each with a handsome trinket suspended, and laid them at the chief's side. The latter took them up with a guttural expression of savage pleasure, and bowed his delight rapidly toward each.

“Let us go round to the other tents,” said Leoline, faintly, “I can not bear this suspense.”



"The young pale-face is looking for a strange squaw, who she thought might be here with your people; do you know if the Indian medicine-woman is here with the Mohawks?" asked Park, on a hint from the Quaker, who sat stiff and unyielding, his broad-brimmed hat shading his face, his hands folded over his knees.

The chief inclined his head and sat for some moments in an attitude of thoughtfulness, then raising himself slowly he asked,

"She Delaware Indian?"

"Yes, yes!" cried Leoline, betraying her anxiety by the deepening color in her cheek and fire in her eye, — "is she here?"

"Delware and Mohawk sometimes friends," said the chief: "Delware hold head very high — Mohawk be higher," he added with great dignity.

Park produced another string of beads, saying, as he did so,

"Will you try to remember if the strange medicine-woman has been here, or is here?"

"Yes, yes," said the chief, holding the beads up to admire their varied colors, "she here — high, tall, — tell dreams — tell hot or cold — tell wet or dry."

"That was she," murmured Leoline, growing pale again.

"Where is she now?" inquired Park, earnestly.

"Gone again," replied the chief, stolidly.

"Which way," persisted Park, "further on, or back to Philadelphia?"

"Back, back," repeated the Indian, waving his hand impressively. "She get plenty medicines to cure the pale-faces; she great woman — ugh?"

They could gather nothing more from this conference — and sick at heart, Leoline arose, and they all went out together. Curious groups had gathered near the chief's tent, and were clamorous to sell their bows and arrows, their moccasins, bags and baskets. Park offered a pretty bag to his mother.

"I have only six at home," she said, laughing.

"Oh! well, you can give them away, mother," responded Park, piling in a pair of gay moccasins, two baskets, and taking for himself a handsome bow and sheath. As he purchased one thing after another, the Indian women became more clamorous for him to buy, and one of them, a roguish-looking creature, with soft black locks and fine eyes, came out of a low tent, holding her child, all tricked out with feathers and colors, and showing her white teeth as she laughingly cried,

"Buy, buy pickaninny? — he worth big silver;" and then straining the little creature to her bosom, she shook her head in a pretty, doubtful manner, as much as to say, "I was only in jest; I wouldn't sell my baby."

Eagerly scanning every dusky feature, Leoline stood sorrowful and silent. She had felt a strange conviction that she should meet her mother among this tribe, but faith and hope died out in her bosom, and she said, sadly,



"I will go back to the city, and give up the search."  
 "Yea, for if Providence intends that thee shall find thy mother, thee will certainly do so," said the Quaker, "in His own good time. It might not do either thee or her good, if thee met now. Thee must put thy faith in God."

## CHAPTER IX.

### A CONVERSAZIONE AT LE VAUGHN'S — AN UNEXPECTED REVELATION.

A year and six months had passed by. Le Vaughn, since the death of his wife, had eschewed all society, confining himself chiefly to his editorial duties. He was now an altered man. Severe thought and mental and moral discipline had made him, to all appearance, austere and recluse. Silver hairs had begun to sprinkle in among his heavy, dark locks; the sockets of his eyes had widened and deepened, and his eyes seemed darker and heavier than in the years of his youth. He was alone in his great house, with Martha installed as house-keeper, a few under-servants, and Nick, who already began to show talents of no mean order. To Martha, with her neat, dark gown and plain cap, Nick looked up with becoming reverence. She had taught him his prayers, improved his habits, and kept a constant and anxious watch over all his actions. His little room was next to hers, and she almost felt a motherly love, that developed itself in a thousand ways, and gave her a beauty, in the eyes of the boy, both moral and personal, that time might never efface. The little fellow had long had the benefit of the first teachers, and since Le Vaughn's cousins — who had teased him beyond the strength of his good nature to endure — had married, and gone to homes of their own, he had made rapid progress to the utmost satisfaction of his instructors and his foster-father, who loved him with the intensity of a desolate heart, doubly rified of all that had made life dear.

Up to this time, Le Vaughn, as we have said, had, since his wife's demise, eschewed all society; but at the request of a friend who had formed an association intended to combine friendly relaxation and literary amusement, he had consented to open his parlors that evening for their occupancy.

Le Vaughn at first decided to seclude himself in his own room, but as evening drew near, and the tall candles were lighted in the hall, and through all the rooms, his resolution gave way before the cheerful glow, and he stood in his parlor receiving his guests as they came. Mrs. Dinsmore, who happened to be in town, and Park, arrived first, accompanied by Van Alstyne and Mrs. Swan, the Quaker's forewoman, looking as pure, as sweet, and placid as ever. As she entered, her eye roved round the room, and fastened at last upon Nick, who sat



on a low seat, his bright face shining with contentment, his hair hanging and clustering in curls, and his soft, dark eyes luminous with anticipation. As the hour advanced, the parlors began to sparkle and glow with life. Many of the most eminent men of the city were present, all the celebrities in literature; lawyers, doctors, merchants of high standing, women of learning and intelligence. The busy hum of conversation grew deeper and steadier; but through all the cheer and mirth, and happiness, the Quaker's forewoman stood self-possessed, calm, and pale, generally gazing towards the boy with an expression no pen can depict. Once he stood by her side, and, she, with a trembling pressure, laid her hand on his head, and then with a shudder, glanced at Le Vaughn, while an expression of horror crossed her white face.

"You will excuse us, I am sure, for bringing our little girl," said a sweet voice, and Le Vaughn, turning, met the wife of Dr. Angell, who held by the hand a slightly-framed and beautiful creature, whose face was as spiritual as an angel's.

"She has such an aversion to staying alone," said Mrs. Angell, half aside, "and is so strangely sensitive and imaginative that we never leave her, so, as the doctor expressed a strong desire that I should come this evening, I ventured to break in upon the rules and bring a friend a little under twenty," she added, laughing.

"Dear child," said Le Vaughn, gazing into the sweet face upturned to his; and then stooping to hide some emotion that he did not wish to be seen, he kissed the white forehead, and taking the small hands in both of his, pressed them fervently, bit his lip, that in spite of his self-possession trembled violently, and turned away for a moment. As he turned, he met the glance of the Quaker's forewoman, and it fascinated him like the gaze of a serpent. He shuddered, and yet he felt impelled to look again, but as he essayed to do so, the woman moved away and mingled with the throng.

Chip and Nick sat side by side, little conscious of the way in which their interests were woven with members of that brilliant company; she gazing about with an expression half of pleasure and half of pain, and he gazing at her, forming an interesting picture of miniature manhood and womanhood. Sometimes he would lay his hand cautiously on her hand, and then, as their glances met, a glad smile broke over his face, to which she faintly responded. The boy could not, no one could recognize in this spiritual creature, the white, half-famished, neglected Chip of the hill-cave. Her eyes were no longer the fearful glitter that once made their beauty so wild. They had deepened and grown darker in color, till they were nearer a rich hazel than a blue. Quick as the leap of the throbbing pulse, the rich color mounted to her delicately-tinted cheek at sight of any new object of interest, and as quickly receded. She was new to the world, fresh almost as a creation recently inspired with the breath of life.

"What's all this contention about?" asked Le Vaughn, moving toward several persons, in the midst of whom were Park Dinsmore, whose face was violently flushed, and his friend the young professor,



standing leaning against the wall, a quiet smile on his lip and an absent expression in his glance.

"Why, we have come in possession, in some unaccountable manner, of an antique manuscript, dated back to — yesterday," said Doctor Angell, holding a copy of verses up triumphantly. "I purpose to read them for the benefit of imaginative mortals like myself, but this young gentleman (pointing to Park) protests in such a way that we are inclined to think he at least knows the authorship, ancient as it is. Now, I propose to take the minds of the company assembled; ladies and gentlemen, is it your mind that this ancient manuscript, dated yesterday, shall be read, the author *nolens volens*. The ayes have it!" he exclaimed, triumphantly, and proceeded to read the poem.

"Look!" said Le Vaughn, in a momentary pause — "look at that child."

Those whose attention he had thus called, turned to behold Chip, her hands pressed together, her eyes palpitating almost, so large and glorious they grew as she listened, lost, wrapt in pleasure, dead to every thing but the rhythm of the poem.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Le Vaughn vehemently, under his breath, "I'd give every thing I possess for a child like that!" and a heavy sigh attested to the sincerity of his remark.

"Why! my little daughter!" said the doctor fondly, as the child shrank back toward him. "Ah, she's an enthusiast, and a good judge of poetry, too, let me tell you." Park, for the first time, turned his attention to the little girl, and as he gazed in her soft, expressive eyes, a spark of celestial fire seemed to fly from her soul into his; young, slight, fragile as the beautiful creature was, from that moment he loved her.

The evening had waned an hour, when an unusual stir and excitement became visible among the guests. Van Alstyne, who had wandered about with aimless look, or lounged an uninterested spectator, suddenly, with face all aglow, started from the low seat which he had for the last few moments occupied, and leaving his pupil's childish questions unanswered, crossed the room, striving hard to control his excitement as he went.

"The Quaker's protege," murmured one and another as a commanding woman entered, leaning on the arm of Mrs. Dinsmore. The whisper reached Le Vaughn, who was deep in a controversy on tides with a very learned clergyman; he also directed his gaze, toward the new-comer, and with the exclamation of "Good heavens it is she!" leaned heavily back in his chair, while his face took on a ghastly paleness frightful to behold. He seemed rooted to the spot, while Mrs. Dinsmore presented the new arrival to one and another; his knees almost refused to bear his weight; he groaned audibly as she came nearer and nearer to himself, when of a sudden she paused, retraced her steps, and stood in quiet converse with Park Dinsmore. At length he commanded himself sufficiently to ask, "Who is she?" with apparent unconcern.



"I am not yet able to learn her name," replied one of the company.  
 "She was introduced uniquely," remarked another, "as, a friend of mine, Miss —; I really couldn't get the name. She is quite a curiosity, I believe — nobody knows her except the Dinsmores, and, I should imagine, Van Alstyne."

A clear, sweet and powerful voice rang through the room. It was Leoline singing. Le Vaughn, with his head bent over and leaning on his hand, let the heavy tear-drops fall one by one, until, with a mighty effort, he pressed them back and forced himself to be calm. Van Alstyne stood near the performer. There was no mistaking his adoring look, nor the signs of anguish that accompanied it. Exiled as he felt himself forever from Leoline, Le Vaughn could not resist a pang of jealousy that wounded his heart as he observed Van Alstyne's manner.

"How ardently and how truly I might love her now," he thought, "and how happy I might make her. At least it is worth the trial."

Mrs. Dinsmore and Leoline soon after retired into a private dressing-room, kindly furnished them by the good Martha. Leoline sat in a dejected attitude, while her friend seemed striving to comfort her.

"No, no, my dear, kind madam," exclaimed Leoline in tones of deep anguish, "I cannot, I cannot consent to this again. It has been the extremest torture to meet the public gaze of even those who were here to-night. I never will be seen again as Leoline, except in my own home; I am satisfied that I shall never be happy in society. Let me go back to my gray gown; let me be the respected forewoman of Quaker John's establishment; I will ask nothing more. I shall never return to the world in this guise — *you* are not to blame," she added, seeing tears of distress in the eyes of Mrs. Dinsmore, "you, my kindest, dearest friend, next to those who have saved me from despair, you did it for the best; I wish the result had been otherwise, I most sincerely wish it; but — oh! why was this cross laid upon me?" she cried out in the anguish of her heart.

Mrs. Dinsmore was silent; what could she say to alleviate so violent a sorrow.

After a few moments Leoline lifted her head, wiped her eyes, and saying mournfully, "There is but one more heavy, heavy duty before me in this world," she proceeded to change her attire, while Mrs. Dinsmore quietly assisted her.

"Leoline, I *must* speak now," replied Mrs. Dinsmore; "pardon me, but you do not mean to refuse poor Van Alstyne? Leoline, do not throw your happiness away so lightly — Leoline! do not sin against yourself and him."

A muffled figure stood at the door of the coach, as Leoline saw by the coach lamp; it was Van Alstyne. He handed her in, unconscious of her disguise, and pressed her hand as he did so, springing immediately beside her. The door was shut, and they were slowly driven on.

"Where is Mrs. Dinsmore?" asked Leoline, in a low voice; "I thought she was to ride with us."



"No, Park made some other arrangement," replied Van Alstyne. "and I felt," he added rapidly, after a tremulous pause, "that I must unburden my soul to you this very night, Leoline —"

"Mrs. Swan, if you please," said the low, calm voice, though the whole figure had shrunk back, and rested throbbing against the side of the coach, dreading yet longing to hear the dear words that she would prevent — loving almost to adoration, yet abandoned to despair.

"Leoline — I — beg your pardon — still — could I be so mistaken?"

"Perhaps you do not yet understand," said Leoline, in a low, cold voice, holding every motion in check as she spoke — "Mrs. Swan, the forewoman of John Lake's straw shop," she repeated, in an explanatory manner. "Had you not better return?"

"No, no; pardon me," he said, drawing yet half checking a heavy sigh; "I observed that you were at the assembly, in the early part of the evening," he added, endeavoring to assume a more cheerful voice; "but Miss Leoline — the young lady, I mean, for whom I addressed you, certainly came with Mrs. Dinsmore. It was really very awkward of me not to perceive — she is a pupil of mine," stammered Van Alstyne, remembering the passionate character of his attempted address.

"I am aware of that," said the cold voice.

"You are, — then I presume you know the young lady."

"I am acquainted with her," was the reply.

"Indeed! Do you understand why she secludes herself from the world as she does? Has she parents? Is she a relative or friend Lake's? I have been told so."

"I can not answer your questions," said the voice, now slightly tremulous.

"Well, she is a wonder. You heard her sing to-night? Was not that a voice to be proud of? Ah, she is an angel?"

With what secret rapture did Leoline drink in these words, conveying as they did a greater depth and meaning than he intended for the forewoman's passionless ear! and still came the chilling thought, "ah! if he *knew* would he speak thus?" and the habitual distrust which she had nursed so many years, came weighing down her heart like a cold stone. The coachman now stopped to inquire where he should leave the lady.

"At friend Lake's garden-gate," said Leoline, "I have the key and can let myself in."

The pale March moon threw a clear, vivid luster over the still ranks of the streets, and the tall houses loomed up like specters in the silver light. The leafless trees, unbudded yet, set their penciled boughs against the white walls that trembled with shadows; the snow had been melting all day, and the soft trickle of the water running down the streets, could be distinctly heard. Van Alstyne accompanied the forewoman to the Quaker's garden-gate, saw her turn the key, both bade farewell, and he returned to his carriage. Leoline,



as she locked the gate on the inside, moved hastily up the yard and turning to the right came to an arched passage. Going through this she found herself in the rear of the old house in which nearly a century before, tradition said, a family by the name of Hantz were murdered in cold blood. It was a dark, brick mansion, its windows covered with large gray blinds, and each corniced with heavy stucco-work. It wore a desolate look, except that through the three glass-panes over the door leading into the lumber and rubbish-filled yard, shone a small but cheerful light. Entering this door Leoline locked it again, and taking the little lamp from the floor, moved along the wide, carpetless hall over which the beams were curved, ascended the first flight of stairs, and entered her own room, in the fireplace of which a few brands yet smoldered. There she sat down, dejected and spiritless, even with the sweet words to which she had listened, still echoing in her ears. "He *does* love me," she murmured, "loves me for myself alone; and yet I must pain this great, good, noble heart with a refusal, and live ever after on the sweet remembrance of his affection."

The evening after the literary meeting took place at Mr. Le Vaughn's, Leoline received a letter. It was nearly dusk before she left the shop, and quite candlelight when she had doffed her daily costume, and sat down to her simple supper. The missive which she had received at the hands of a boy whom she knew to be connected with Le Vaughn's office, she seemed in no haste to open; and it was not till the table was cleared, and she had brushed the shining hearth, that she broke the seal and began to read the four pages of closely written letter-paper. It was from Le Vaughn, pouring out his soul in contrition; acknowledging his sin, and praying for her forgiveness, and offering as the only reparation in his power, his hand, heart, and fortune, if she would but consent to accept them after so many years of sorrow and repentance. Over one sentence what scalding tears she shed — "Our child is with me; I have taken him to my home and my heart, to educate, to treat in all respects as a son, to be my heir — to fill the place of my own lost child, and unless you forbid it, I shall retain him. You never knew that he lived, for, for your sake as well as my own, I caused him to be conveyed from you at birth, and through a series of strange vicissitudes he was brought at last to my notice, nearly two years ago, while I was traveling in search of my own lost little girl."

Leoline read with a fierce calmness, and then, only saying, "Does he think he can purchase happiness with me?" she placed the letter on the coals, and watched it till it curled and crisped and turned to ashes. She did not speak nor move nor sigh; she looked straight into the fire — it might not have been consciously so — her lips rigidly compressed, her eyes strained and bloodshot, and her cheeks colorless. A sound of footsteps was heard; she mechanically arose, unlocked her door, threw it open, and with the same unnatural composure met and welcomed Van Alstyne. A faint gleam might have rippled over her face once; but he was in the dark entry, and did not



see it. He came in and sat down. The fire-glow flickered over the wall as it was wont; a volume in Spanish lay open at the last lesson, pencil-marked. A sheet of new music stood upright on the edge of the little old piano. Pen, ink and paper were all ready — everything was right, exact, and proper, save Leoline, with her bloodless face and constrained manner. A subtle gloom fell over Van Alstyne: it seemed to emanate from her presence. He studied the tiles on the chimney-front; he gazed long and vaguely at a somber-tinted picture hanging against the old wall. All was silent, cold, dark; there seemed to be vitality neither in himself, Leoline, nor the surroundings.

“What did you think of the assembly?” he asked, at length, leaning back, as he lifted the Spanish grammar in his right hand.

“I scarcely know,” replied Leoline.

“Shall we commence where we left off?”

“I cannot study,” replied Leoline, coldly; then, as if gathering up strength to say something not altogether agreeable, she added, rising as she spoke, “Mr. Van Alstyne, I shall not require your tuition after this evening.”

Had he heard aright? he looked at her as one stunned, as if a blow had been dealt him.

“Miss Leoline, what have I done to displease you?”

“Nothing — oh! believe me, nothing! it is —” for *my* peace, she would have added, but she checked herself.

“Miss Leoline, this is sudden — have you thought of taking this step previous to to-night?” he asked, knowing scarcely what he said.

She did not answer, but sank into her seat, incapable of speech.

“Before I go,” said Van Alstyne, stooping a little as if a burden had been suddenly put upon him, while his mild eye grew humid, and his hair hung damp across his pale, fair forehead, “before I go, permit me to say, in as few words as possible, that I love you. My confession has been brief and honest; give me as brief and as honest an answer, and if it is not favorable, I will — bear my fate.”

How she trembled! One moment relenting, the next falling back upon her strong resolve; one moment longing to look up in his face, and lay her hand in his; the next denying even this small indulgence, lest her resolution should give way, and she waver in her mistaken sense of duty.

“Leoline, does this silence imply that I must leave you?” asked Van Alstyne, at last; and had she turned to him then, she must have relented at sight of the woe in his eyes.

“No — yes, yes! leave me, forget me! — go! I can do nothing to you — oh, do not add to the anguish that was before greater than I could bear! My kind teacher, my faithful friend, leave me, and forever! we must never, never meet again!” she cried with shaking voice and face averted. “Do not ask me why,” she added, as he involuntarily moved toward her, “only go, only forget me!” and the words were lost in sobs.

Van Alstyne stood irresolute, distressed, unable to interpret the



vehemence of her manner. The words that had been thronging to his lips remained unspoken; but he did speak at last, and his voice was dry and husky, as he said,

"This, then, must be a final interview?"

"It must," echoed Leoline, still without moving or looking toward him.

"Then, farewell!" he said, and the words sounded as if they came from a sepulcher — "give me your hand, as a token that I am not altogether unwelcome to you."

Oh! could he have seen the wild, leaping, throbbing pulsation of the poor heart so fiercely tried? But he could not. The hand he took was icy cold; and with an Indian stoicism, Leoline held her eyes veiled, nor once looked up in the face that had been and still was dearer than the very light of day to her vision. Dizzy, sick, and bewildered, Van Alstyne turned away. His temples burned, his step was unsteady, coals of fire seemed heaped upon his heart. Wearily he found his way to the door, groped down the dim staircase alone, for Leoline sat in a stupor where she had sank when he left her, and emerged into the street. It was a cold, wet night. The gusty wind rattled the signs, and blew a fine cutting rain in his face; there was sleet upon the sidewalk, an inky blackness overhead, the lamps burned dimly here and there; black specters, with umbrellas lifted, gliding along in the muffled gloom, picking their cautious way with a strange, sprite-like motion, and wherever the sound of mirth or melody floated from some central group of home and happiness it sounded as discordant as laughter at a funeral.

## CHAPTER X.

### IN WHICH CHIP IS RECOGNIZED BY THE INDIAN.

UNCONSCIOUS whither or how far his rapid steps carried him, Van Alstyne moved unthinkingly on. How he came there he knew not, but suddenly he found himself in front of the handsome mansion occupied by Doctor Angell, and the impulse of a reckless mood urged him to enter. It was a scene of surpassing comfort that the opened door presented. Several wax candles, set in high, antique candlesticks, shed a soft, bright and agreeable radiance over the room. The warm, rich colors of the carpet, the beautiful tinting of the walls, embellished with superb landscapes, the leaping flames reflected on the high-polished brass fender and andirons, and in the long mirrors on the opposite side of the room, conspired to make a delightful home interior.

Park Dinsmore was the first to spring from his seat and welcome Van Alstyne. Mrs. Angell and a maiden sister, with Mrs. Dinsmore



and Chip, who had been sitting by Park's side on the sofa, were the other inmates of this pleasant parlor. The doctor was absent on his professional visits, but Mrs. Angell hoped would soon be in.

The keen eye of Mrs. Dinsmore penetrated even to Van Alstyne's most secret thought. He felt that she divined the cause of his dejection, and he tried to put on an air of gayety that sat illy upon his pale face, and contrasted painfully with the abstraction that every little while betrayed his laboring sorrow. Park was too much engaged with the charming child at his side to give much attention to his friend.

"Oh! she's the greatest little wonder alive," he exclaimed, aside, to the latter; "I'm just fascinated with her. Van Alstyne," he added, a few moments afterward, with great seriousness, "I'm going to make her my wife."

"Nonsense!" said the professor, his cheek flushing and paling — "that child!"

"Yes, that child! Why not? By and by she'll not be a child. I tell you it's been revealed to me, and as sure as she lives and I live, I'll marry her."

Van Alstyne smiled, or tried to smile in his friend's face.

"What is it?" said Mrs. Angell, speaking quickly.

A red face was thrust in at the open door, and holding it still ajar, the girl who stood there said,

"Indeed, Mrs. Angell, there's the quarest old man come to sell herbs out in the kitchen, and he's dressed in the quarest sort of way, and he ses, 'man't he see the lady, and tell her fortune, or sing a song for her?' so I come to see."

Park burst into a hearty laugh, while the doctor's wife said,

"I don't know as I care about seeing him."

"Oh! Mrs. Angell, do let the man come in," said Park; "I dote on fortune-tellers, don't you, little Lena?" he asked, kissing the nestling child.

"Let him come in if he is any way decent," said Mrs. Angell, and away went the maid.

Presently a tall, dark, bony, slender old man entered, with a woman's cloak hanging from his shoulders, under which might be seen a dingy coat and breeches. A long red neck-cloth hung in voluminous folds from his neck almost to his knees; a slouched hat covered his head, under which stood out a mass of short, straight black locks; in his right hand he carried a cane, in his left a bundle. He bowed low to Mrs. Angell, bowed to each one of the rest, and cast a long, lingering glance upon Chip, who, with a childish fear, clung to her protector.

Park started, and exchanged a glance of intelligence with Van Alstyne, as the piercing black eye of the stranger rested upon him. Van Alstyne looked long and curiously at the straight form of the apparently aged man — but when the latter said, turning to Mrs. Angell, "Shall I sing for you, lady? I have some little songs I sing for people who buy my herbs," he nodded his head to Park, and for a moment his sadness was merged in curiosity.



"Shall I sing, or shall I tell you a story? I tell stories, too, to amuse the ladies and gentlemen — yes, I'll tell you a story:

"Once," continued the old beggar, in low, intense tones, "a man found a little bird. It was a poor little bird, all beak and claws, without any feathers — a very ugly-looking bird. The man took the bird to his house — the poor little bird, all beak and claws — and he got a beautiful cage for it, a golden cage, and he put it where the sunlight came in on it, and he fed it with sugar, so that the poor little bird began to pick up. Little by little the feathers came and the flesh grew, and the color made the wings bright, and the bird began to sing and hop. Every day it grew lovelier and lovelier, till it was the handsomest bird that ever was seen; and the man who found it wouldn't take — no, not thousands of dollars for it. But one day there came an eagle with a black feather in his wings, and when he saw this beautiful bird, he wanted it; and he watched a time — he watched — his — time," continued the stranger, his voice growing lower and deeper, "and one day he came with a great swoop, and caught the bird, and tore it all to pieces."

As he said this, the stranger turned, and, pointing to Chip, from whose delicate face all color had fled, cried, holding out his shaking, skinny fingers at the child:

"Look out for the bird — the eagle is coming!"

One quick, piercing shriek filled the room; the sensitive child lay in a death-like swoon, and as Mrs. Angell rushed toward her, with the rest, the stranger left the room.

Pale as a white lily, the poor little girl lay in her protector's arms, while Park knelt beside her, applying restoratives to her nostrils, and pushed the masses of beautiful hair back from her brow. Slowly returning to consciousness, at last Chip lifted her head and gazed about wildly, crying.

"Take me away! where is she?"

In vain the earnest, soothing tones of Park, and the quiet, loving persuasions of the doctor's wife. The eyes, the features, the gestures of the stranger were too strongly stamped upon her memory to be forgotten, and with deep distress her kind foster-mother saw the work of many an anxious month seemingly annihilated, and reproached herself for having admitted the weird old creature who, it was plainly to be seen, was hopelessly crazed. And, while she mused, and Park, sitting down to the old family organ, played a gentle air from one of Beethoven's symphonies, her very heart grew cold at the recollection of the old man's story.

"A little bird, a poor little bird found by the roadside," she thought; "hung in a gilded cage — growing beautiful, and of great value — the similitude is striking; yet what could this old man know of our poor little bird? 'Look out for the bird — the eagle is coming.'"

An undefinable terror took possession of her breast as the words dashed again upon her brain, but she dared not give it voice, for Chip lay trembling on her heart.



Excusing herself, the doctor's wife led her charge out of the room, holding her with a strong grasp, to her own chamber, and there with prayer and sweet womanly encouragement, strove to soothe her to forgetfulness.

"Well, what do you think, Van Alstyne?" asked Park, as he accompanied the former to the door.

"Just as you do, I presume," said the professor, moodily.

"That was the old woman, Mother Kurstegan, as sure as you live."

"I know it," replied Van Alstyne.

"Why didn't we follow the old witch? Van Alstyne, this is a strange matter — the more I think of it, the more it perplexes me; why should she feel such a mad interest in this child? Let me whisper in your ear — little Lena is a foundling, and that Indian woman is Leoline's own mother!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the professor, a sudden light breaking in on his mind.

"Say nothing of it yet — they worship the child," murmured Park.

"And this crazed creature is the mother of Leoline!" thought Van Alstyne, as he strode on to his lodgings; "and can it be that she imagines a relation so unhappy would be any bar to my love? No, no! if she were twice an outcast I would love her! I will not believe her answer final! I must hope, even against hope!"

The pretended man was, of course, no other than Mother Kurstegan. For a year she had wandered in this disguise through every part of the city, in rich men's houses, amid the hovels of the poor, seeking her lost treasure. In every kitchen in which she was admitted, her skill in fortune-telling by palmistry, won her a ready ear and a quick tongue from the servants. If there were children in the family, she made a pretence that she could tell their future destiny by some sign of face and feature, and she seldom left any dwelling until she had accomplished the purpose for which she had entered it. On the night in question she had heard enough from the servants to recognize in the strange child, on whose peculiarities they were ready to dilate, Chip of the cave — and as she hurried along the dismal street her heart bounded with a savage joy as she gloated on the possibility of again possessing her, and so torturing the father's soul afresh. Pausing in her walk at length, and looking about haggardly to see that she was not followed, she pushed on to the lower part of the city, and disappeared among the gloomy buildings that lifted their tall fronts to the docks and the sullen river.

At twelve at night the storm had cleared away. The moonbeams shone into the large, desolate attic of a tall old house overlooking the Delaware. A straw bed scantily covered, crowded up against the wall, upon which lay a restless form. Tied to nails on different parts the walls were bunches of dried herbs, and paper was scattered in fragments on the fireless hearth and over the floor. An old clock



covered the recumbent person, a heap of clothes seemed to have been gathered up for additional warmth — a man's hat stood on one broad window-seat, a cup and plate, a spoon and knife on the other.

"That was a dreadful night," muttered the Indian; "I dreamed of it. It must have been last night — no — no — for I saw Chip last night. Oh, that girl! to desolate this old heart so!" she cried, fiercely, and, drawing her cloak about her, she walked to and fro, while the noisy rats ran up and down between the rafters, keeping her dismal company. "Leoline! would God I had taken thee to the forest — oh, this accursed civilization! my father is gone, my husband is gone, my child is gone, my people are gone — I am alone; a naked tree stripped of its branches, its roots, its life, and hewn into a guidepost — so many miles to eternity. I wish I could forget," she murmured, seating herself, and swaying her bonnet to and fro, "forget the lessons I have learned, the splendor I have lived in, the wrongs that have been done and that I have done — all, all but my happy life in the woods, before I knew the pale-face. How white he looked! I can see him now, tied to the tree. And I flew to him, hung on his neck, pleaded for his life, saved him, loved him, fled with him, married him, lost him. Then to be happy I should have gone to the wild backwoods again; forgotten that the curse of society had ever fallen upon me, and brought my child up to be the honorable wife of a warrior. Oh! woe is me! — oh! woe is me that I hate my own child." Again she resumed her walk, and the memory of some eventful night came upon her with overwhelming force. "They took the child from her and gave it to another; poor thing! to suffer so, and then be robbed; it was a terrible night — they carried the child away, and the woman who took it died the next week; that was strange. I kept sight of it though till it got to the alms-house; that was a fine place, and it was I who told Job Goodale where to find a boy for what he wanted: to kick and pinch and starve — ha, ha — Lord have mercy on me, that I hate my own child's child. Then I sent *him* a letter, and he came in hot haste after poor Chip, and went home without her, ha, ha, ha, ha; but took Nick instead — as I meant he should, ha, ha, ha. I met him yesterday — yes, finely dressed, with books in his hand — the young imp. If it had been dark and I could have ate him without leaving any bones I'd have done it — that I would. Chip — Chip — I'll have her! I'll paint her face and make her a squaw; I'll teach her Delaware, and kill the first pale-face that looks at her — yes, I will, I will; and," she continued, working herself into a frenzy, "when she is Indian in her habits and tastes, and the wife of a warrior, and the mother of Indian children, then Le Vaugn shall see her, and shall not know his high-bred daughter. I wish I could sleep, but my head burns so. That light in the sky — a streak of blood — a tomahawk — a white blanket — my tribe would prophesy war or famine. I wish war would come — I wish famine would come — I wish plague would come and sweep every white man from the face of the earth."

She had risen and stood gazing out upon the strange circle **grade**



ally forming about the moon. There was a faint red streak crossing its disk, and the gathering clouds, light as they were, took weird shape. The Indian's face shone with unnatural fire; her cheek-bones, more prominent from care and long fasts, seemed closing over her eyes; her hair cut short hung on her forehead, stiffly, and down along the temples. Her ankles and her feet were bare — and her hands crossed each other, clutching the much-worn camlet cloak. She stood there till the moonlight faded from the sky, and left the night to go out in darkness

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Le Vaughn was sitting in his sanctum the next morning, when Dr Angell hurriedly entered.

“You look flushed, my dear fellow,” said Le Vaughn, offering a seat.

“Flushed, and well I may; I've been ever since three o'clock this morning on my feet; there are so many cases of fever, and they begin just as they did last year, in the vicinity of these undrained marshy tracts, which I'm afraid will be hot-beds of pestilence by the fall. I tell you we are in danger. There's the accumulation of a year's drainings in the wharf-slips, where the water is cut off from the current of the river; I was down with the physician of the hospital inspecting them to-day. What the result will be when the heat of July steams down over the mud and vegetable matter, and green slime, and rotten wood, and draws up the putrid gas to mix it with the atmosphere, God knows.”

“The matter was discussed last fall,” said Le Vaughn.

“I know it; and with what results? If ever the Scripture declaration was true of any people, it is of our Philadelphians, — ‘they have madness in their hearts.’ For three years I have been laboring to have them take hold of this matter. Our streets are pregnant with death; our very homes are full of the seeds of disease. I tell you, Le Vaughn, I wouldn't live in Philadelphia after the first of August, if I could make one hundred dollars in gold every day: and I have an awfully solemn conviction that we are on the eve of some great calamity, which I believe will come in the shape of pestilence, if the people don't take this matter into consideration. We can not violate natural laws and nature, and escape the consequences.”

“Write an article about this matter, and I'll publish it,” said Le Vaughn.

“Certainly I will; but — excuse me, madam.” In stepping back, for he had arisen, he came in contact with a woman who had entered noiselessly, and was nearing the desk. The doctor's sudden exclamation caused Le Vaughn to look up, and to change color as he did so. Mother Kurstegan, in her faded bonnet and camlet cloak, with piercing eyes and erect figure, her lips pressed together, a look of fatigue rendering her careworn countenance more repulsive, for she had slept none the preceding night, stood before him.

“Well!” said Le Vaughn, glancing uneasily towards the doctor



who, betrayed into surprise, was involuntarily studying the face of the woman. Dr. Angell, bowing, immediately went out, and Le Vaughn gave evidence by the pallor, by convulsive knitting of the brow, by an agitation of the muscles, and laboring of the breath, how terribly her presence was felt by him. He tried to command his reason, his temper—and, with a blandness, which he was far from feeling, he requested her to seated.

“Never, in your presence,” she exclaimed, with a restless eye. “I want money, and you must give me some. I am hungry! I am cold—besides I have something to tell you, if you will give me money.”

“Something to tell you”—that proved the open sesame to Le Vaughn’s purse. His sternness melted: “Give me the truth concerning my child, and you shall never know want,” he said, standing up close to her side, though she tried to shrink from him. “You shall live in my own house; sit by my fireside and be honored, and happy; and, listen,” he continued—“I will make your daughter my wife, if she will marry me.”

The Indian’s eye blazed; her whole face kindled with indignation as she towered above her own tall stature, and flashed upon him a look of hate, scorn, defiance, loathing,—all concentrated in one scorching glare.

“Marry you,” she exclaimed, in a choking voice. Then drawing her breath till her nostrils dilated, and the veins of her temples swelled almost to bursting, she repeated, “marry you! I’d burn her to death, as sure as there is a God in Heaven, if I thought she would stoop to marry you.”

“Come, woman, stop this nonsense,” said Le Vaughn hoarsely, angered in his turn; “it needs but a very little provocation to make me give you up to justice as a most abominable criminal, a child-stealer—murderer, for what I know.”

The yell of laughter that rang from the Indian’s throat, as she clenched her camlet cloak around her, was so shrill and unearthly, that it brought several of the men from the room adjoining to the door of the office.

“Hush! mad woman,” exclaimed Le Vaughn, shutting the door upon the curious faces. “Here, how much money do you want? Take it and go; I am hell when you are by.”

“We’ll be there—mark my words—both of us. Oh!” she cried, with another crazed laugh, “how glad I am there is a hell; how I’ll torment you there! a hell! a hell!” she cried again—

“Yes, there is a hell.”

“Here, here is money,” said Le Vaughn, now white as a sheet, thrusting forward several pieces of gold—“go, leave me; if you want more, write; don’t come near me again; it is best for you, best for me.”

“Yes, this money looks handsome; it glitters; they needn’t say palm trees don’t grow in this country, for there’s a golden palm,” she added, her mind following a new vagary as she held out her



hand on which the money was spread; "now look here; you think I'm crazy, I know; there never *was* a greater mistake; I'm just as sane as you are; I know all about you — I know all about Leoline. I know all about — what did you call her?" she asked with a savage cunning.

"Oh! for God's sake, stop! stop! don't drive me to frenzy, woman."

"Perhaps you hadn't named her, but I had; Chip *was* her name, but that isn't her name now! Oh! the silks and the satins! how beautiful they *do* dress her!"

Le Vaughn groaned — the blood gushed upward to his brain; the atmosphere was black about him. Had this demon sold his child to infamy already! The thought crushed him, and even the poor demented creature, glorying in his misery, seemed constrained to pity as she beheld him thus, for she said, solemnly, "Man! if you feel such sorrow for your child, scarcely seen or known, think of the mother who has reared her daughter up to womanhood, only to have her destroyed. Farewell! your child is in this city; destruction and pestilence are coming in the air; but, mark me, if the pestilence spare her I will not;" and so saying she went from the office, leaving Le Vaughn sick and bewildered.

## CHAPTER XI.

### CHIP AGAIN MISSING — MOTHER KURSTEGAN AND HER PRIZE.

THE candles flared on the mantle-top, the curtains swayed to and fro, waved by a light breeze that came from the river. Suddenly a hurried foot was heard on the stairs, and Park burst in, flushed, breathless, and bewildered in look and manner.

"Dinsmore! why, what —"

"Oh, she's gone — lost — stolen!" cried Park throwing himself across the table, and leaning his head on his hands; then springing up, he exclaimed; "Van Alstyne, I'm almost crazy! Mrs. Angell is in despair — little bird, little Lena is carried off!"

"You don't mean it," said Van Alstyne, stepping back, his blood crawling.

"We been going all over the city, the doctor and I, and three or four officers; oh, Van Alstyne, it just seems as if my head would burst, and my heart, too! I never had anything happen to me so terrible as this!" and the poor fellow, breaking down, sobbed passionately, like a child.

"Don't, don't, my dear Park," said the professor, his lip trembling and his voice unsteady, as he threw an arm over Park's tremulous frame; "don't give way to your feelings; it may not be so bad, you know; she'll be found."



"Oh, but the carriage! — the doctor's horse and chaise, both gone, and had been, for half an hour, when he came out! You see," continued Park, wiping his streaming eyes, and steadying his voice that wavered and trembled, "Doctor Angell was called in to a man in a fit when he was driving home, at three this afternoon. His horse was quiet, you know, Lena was with him; he thought he shouldn't be gone but a minute or so, and he left her sitting in the chaise. Well, he found the case a bad one, and you know how absent-minded he is when he is interested; I've no doubt he forgot the poor child, and oh, Van Alstyne, when he went out, only half an hour after, and came to think of the carriage and the child, they were gone, horse, chaise, and all. You know he seldom rides," and heaving a heavy sigh, Park wiped the tears that flowed afresh, saying, "I haven't cried a day since I was a little fellow, but I am just about used up, I am, indeed."

"Horse and chaise gone!" said Van Alstyne; "did any-body see it drive off?"

"Yes, one old man standing in a shop-door at the corner; a half-blind old fellow; he saw — that is, he couldn't see, of course, you know, but then somebody jumped into the chaise and drove off; he thought it was the doctor; it wasn't a minute after he had gone in."

"And she was too much frightened to scream, poor child," said Van Alstyne.

"Oh, don't, don't, you make me creep!" exclaimed Park, turning to his friend, with a shudder; then suddenly starting up, he added, "we're going off again as soon as the doctor is rested the least bit in the world — he was up all night, poor man. I had just gone round there to try and prevail on Mrs. Angell to go out with us and take birdy — we have two carriages in town, you see — when the doctor came in looking like a ghost, and says he, 'wife, little bird is gone, carriage, horse, and all!' Poor woman! she looked fit for her coffin; she never said a word, but just sank back perfectly lifeless till they brought her to. Ever since then the doctor and I have raced with every chaise on the road in hopes to come across his. It's clear as daylight who took the child — that confounded crazy Indian has her."

"Havn't you seen Le Vaughn?"

"Heavens and earth, Van Alstyne, I thought of that, but I'm afraid it'll upset him. As sure as you and I live, that old woman wouldn't be after her if she wasn't his child; and now when he comes to know that she's been right here within the reach of his hand for a whole year, it's likely to give him a death-stroke. Then, again, if he knew it, he'd move the whole creation but what he'd find her. I don't know what to do, I'm sure; Le Vaughn is out of town, and won't be home till to-morrow morning. But I mustn't stay."

"Stop a moment; I'm going with you," said Van Alstyne, locking his portfolio; and catching up his hat, they left the house together.

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On the very afternoon of Chip's abduction, Le Vaughn had left the



city in his own chaise, to be present at a christening. As he rode along, and felt the cooler, sweeter breezes of the country air play upon his brow, his spirits revived. Nick was with him, full of wild glee, exulting in the ride, and in the pleasure of accompanying Le Vaugn.

"What do you get on the seat that way for, my son?" asked Le Vaugn, as the boy turned, and, half-kneeling, looked through the square in the back of the chaise.

"To see if anybody's coming — oh! yes, there's a big cloud of dust — how heavy a horse must step to make so much dust — great clouds! our little gray doesn't, she travels beautifully! guess the folks are in a hurry — there, that's Doctor Angell's great brown horse, I declare! And there's Lena — yes, sitting way back; I guess doctor's taking her out to ride; he let me have a *grand* ride day before yesterday. Whew! they're coming fast — father, there's the doctor and Lena; let's stop 'em and speak to 'em."

"The doctor! who, where?" said Le Vaugn, abstractedly, as Nick turned round in order to lean out of the carriage. No sooner had he attained this position, than the other shot by like an arrow, while Nick cried out at the top of his voice, "I say, doctor! stop — it's us."

Away went the chaise as if a demon held the reins, and a faint cry came back upon the still air as it dashed ahead.

"You must be mistaken, my son," said Le Vaugn, increasing his own speed.

"No! I'm sure it was her, but the doctor had a handkerchief tied over his hat, and it fell almost to his chin; and she did scream, didn't she? I'm sure it was Lena, father."

"Strange!" said Le Vaugn, absently; "the doctor may have been called on some case of life and death; yes, the child certainly did scream — perhaps she laughed because the old brown beat my gray."

"I rather think so," replied Nick; "but at any rate it was Lena, and she looked frightened. You don't think the horse is running away, father?"

Le Vaugn's face expressed some concern as he gazed along the road, and saw the chaise still dashing on. "Oh, no," he replied, lightly, "Dr. Angell knows too well how to manage a horse for that — still —" Nick looked at him anxiously, and the two watched the rapidly-vanishing cloud, till a turn in the road hid it from sight, and then Le Vaugn added, "I guess they're safe enough." But a strange uneasiness possessed him; his thoughts would follow the chaise, the doctor with a handkerchief over his face, and the shout or shriek that had caught his ear as they passed. At every opening he would stretch forward, and to Nick's "Do you see them, father?" answer, "Oh, no! I didn't expect to," although it was evident, from his strained and nervous glances, and his occasional exclamations of — "They must have gone that way?" or, "They must have turned that road," that he still dwelt anxiously upon the circumstance.

It was forgotten, however, amid the gayety of the evening, but re-  
 occurred again while they were returning in the fresh and golden calm  
 of a June morning.



Arriving in town, and leaving Nick at the house, Le Vaugn drove slowly to his office. Strangely enough, the memory of the last morning-ride that he had taken nearly two years ago, came back vividly to his mind. He remembered with what solemn forebodings he had moved from street to street; the terrible and unwelcome news that met him at his own door-stone, the sad days and months that had passed over his head since then, filled up with no great or good or memorable deeds. He stopped before the dingy door of his office, and alighting, ran hastily up-stairs. Park Dinsmore and Van Alstyne were just that moment leaving. Struck with their haggard faces, he paused with one foot on the threshold, looking inquiringly at them.

"We have something to communicate to you," Park said, at last, retreating backward into the office, and Le Vaugn, mute, fearful, and pale, followed them, until the three stood round his desk.

"Doctor Angell has lost his little girl," said the professor.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Le Vaugn, "when did she die?"

"She is not dead," returned Van Alstyne; "she is stolen."

"Ha!" cried Le Vaugn, the incident of yesterday striking sharply on his recollection; "I had forgotten it entirely; I declare it had escaped my mind!" he said, vaguely, looking at them.

They returned his look, not being able to comprehend him.

"They passed us, yesterday; yesterday, in the afternoon, near four o'clock — right on our road, and we after them, and it never occurred to me that there was any thing wrong."

Park listened — his agitation was extreme; he stood there white and almost nerveless.

"Did you see them?" he asked. "Oh, can it be possible? Near them — so near, and let them escape?"

"My dear boy, I was totally in the dark about it. I am now; sit down and tell me, and command me to the utmost; I pledge you my word I am the last man to turn away from following after a stolen child;" and a quick shade of anguish crossed his features.

"We have more to tell you," said Van Alstyne, reluctantly, while Park seated himself a little back from the desk, and turned his face the other way. "Circumstances have transpired that lead us to believe that — that — in fact, the child whom we all love and look upon with no ordinary interest, is not in reality the daughter of Doctor and Mrs. Angell."

"What!" exclaimed Le Vaugn, excitedly; "my God! whose is she, then? tell me — tell me. I beg your pardon; my sudden impulses master me — go on;" and forsaken of all his strength he sank back in his seat.

"The child is a foundling," continued Park, who, at the first violent gesture had sprung back to them; "she was taken from the roadside some seven miles from Goodale's inn, among the hills there, and the circumstances under which she was discovered, tend to show that she had been utterly neglected. For two years Mrs. Angell has been developing her mental faculties; which seemed before entirely



dormant. She could get no clue to the former situation of the child, except that — she said she had lived — you will not hear me out, sir.”

“I will, I will!” exclaimed Le Vaughn, with desperate calmness, clutching at the sides of his chair till his hands were purple with the effort; “only tell me one thing; do they suspect who stole the child?”

“They do.”

Le Vaughn breathed hard, and sat with painful and fixed look as he uttered, under his voice —

“Who?”

“An Indian woman who has been prowling about here for several years!”

“Madness!” burst from the blue lips of Le Vaughn; “and she came within my grasp! My child — my darling, my motherless babe. Good God! I am fate’s football!”

The tone was so heart-broken — the words so pitiful, that Van Alstyne turned away to hide his tears. The strong man stood, weak and swaying now, like a reed bent by the tempest. The knowledge that he had touched the hand, the lips, the silken locks of his own dear child — that he had gazed at her with feelings he could neither fathom nor define; that her innocent voice had been heard in his own house; that her heart had beat, once, close to his own — and that now she was borne away, Heaven only knew whither; the knowledge of so much unrecognized bliss, making his agony tenfold more awful, nearly overthrew his reason, and he stood with a fixed and almost maniacal stare, gazing into space. It was but for a moment. With swelling nostrils and flashing eyes, he leaped out of his trance.

“I’ll find her, if it costs me my life,” was all he said, and he rushed from the office.

Officers were sent in all directions after the lost child. The doctor searched unceasingly, giving his business entirely over to his colleague for the time. Mrs. Angell suffered more perhaps than any one else; her intimate knowledge of the child’s habits, antipathies, and extraordinary sensitiveness, making her more keenly and distressingly alive to the thousand indignities and dangers to which in all probability she would be subjected. She could hardly eat or sleep during the time the search lasted. Le Vaughn with the doctor took the same road he had traveled before, and by dint of constant inquiry and indefatigable patience, traced the pair to a tavern thirty miles from the city. Strangely enough the first person that greeted the doctor was the redoubtable Mrs. Snackskin, with bare arms and dress tucked up, bustling about and scolding vigorously.

“Dear me, doctor, yes, ’tis me!” she exclaimed, in hearty accents to his expressions of surprise, “and you may be sure I ain’t got nothing to do more than I ever had with nine children and a great house like this to keep. Snackskin he went and died and left me alone in the world, poor man. I expect he’s better off, but I ain’t, I can tell you. I sold the farm, and got a smart chance to keep



tavern, and so here I be. A man and a little girl. -- why, yes, a man or a woman I don't rightly know which, for he looked like one and spoke like t'other. A horse and chaise — um ! that's what they come in, and she, I mean he, took the gal out and brought her in, and it really made me affecting to look at the poor dnm thing. She made me think of that same poor critter that you took off, doctor — what ever did become of her ? ”

“ That's the same child we are looking for,” said the doctor, gravely.

“ Good gracious — mercy — patience — laws ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Snackskin, holding up her hands, and then depositing them upon her capacious hips; “ you don't say ! Why this one was a reg'lar little wax doll, and the other was a rag-baby.”

“ We can't lose a minute,” said the doctor, smiling in spite of himself at the comparison; “ tell us which way they went and at just what time.”

“ Well, I was going to say that the feller, if she was a feller, went into a room and come out again presently with the child, my sakes ! you should a' seen her ! why, she was that changed I deny you to know her, even you, the father of it as it were. I couldn't see no hair — one great band was tied across her forehead, another under her chin, just for all the world as if she was a live corpse.”

Le Vaugn staggered against the wall.

“ Is the gentleman sick ? ” asked the garrulous Mrs. Snackskin — “ won't he take something ? ” and on receiving a negative she went on — “ then she put the scared thing inter the chaise, and tied herself all up, or himself — saying it's a he — rumbledy humbledy, and off they driv, just ten minutes after four o'clock; and so that's all I know, 'cept that *there's* the road they took; and I reckon you won't find 'em if you go ever so right smart.”

With aching hearts they followed the indicated route. It was now ten o'clock, a warm, somewhat lowering day. They rode on in silence, stopping at every tavern, and almost, every habitation. Some had seen the chaise at such a time; it was driving very fast, and the horse seemed sweating freely. At last they come into a tract of wild land. The ground had evidently been traveled very recently, for through a road nearly in the heart of the pine woods, they followed the wheel-ruts till the horse stumbled, and the wheels were caught by projecting roots and bushes, whose stout arms almost closed up the path.

“ I don't see how we can make any progress here,” said the doctor, “ and still that old witch has managed to get my horse through, for the marks continue. I have an idea that if we leave the horse here and go on foot, we shall fare as well, if not better; we are fresh and the horse is not.”

To this proposition Le Vaugn assented, and they alighted and moved forward along the newly-found path. An hour's walk brought them into a clearing that had at some time been burnt out by the Indians; and there, scratched, and torn, and in many ways much damaged, stood Dr. Angell's chaise. Inside lay Chip's pretty little ~~mat~~.



her dress throughout, except shoes and stockings, and the hat that had probably been worn by the Indian woman. Le Vaughn groaned as the eyes of both gentlemen met.

"The horse is gone," said Doctor Angell, looking about.

"And has been since last night," added Le Vaughn; "probably she is sixty miles from here. She took the horse and retraced her steps from this spot, but where next she went, Heaven only knows!"

"I tell you it's going to be a hard chase," said the doctor. "Now we have this clue, we had better return and hire some Indian scouts; perhaps they can track her from this very spot."

"Keep on now, for the sake of mercy!" exclaimed Le Vaughn, anxiously; "let us at least spend to-day in the search. We can find Indians in the village beyond, who will aid us."

The day waxed and waned; another and another followed and closed and no success; the wily Indian had eluded them all. Little did they dream that with the wonderful cunning of insanity, the crazed creature had ridden back into the city in the dead of night, sought her miserable quarters, and there, in her old disguise, successfully eluded all discovery, while the horse, left to himself, walked quietly to his stable, and was there found by his owner. With the money she had obtained from Le Vaughn, and which really was a considerable amount, Mother Kurstegan had bought furniture for the old room overlooking the river, and bestowed some pains upon its arrangement; so that but for its size and dreary unpapered walls, it would have looked quite comfortable. As it was, in the early summer the prospect from the window was admirable. The Delaware, with its moving panorama, the ever-crowded slips, the constant passing of vehicles, the tree-crowned island in the middle of the river, the wide prospect of sky and distant highlands of the surrounding country, made a pleasant look-out. Hither was Chip carried, almost helpless from fear, on the night of the day on which she had been stolen. The house was inhabited, room by room, by separate families, all foreigners, who could not even speak a word of the English language. Among them, for the time, Mother Kurstegan was safe. She had procured a key for the entrance, and in the dead of night led the unresisting child up flight after flight of stairs, until at last she arrived at her own domicile. Here the moon shone in, and Chip stood in the center of the room, looking about her with an expression almost vacant, so hopeless was it. There she stood, silent, the big tears beginning to roll down her cheeks, while Mother Kurstegan bustled about to strike a light. She put her hands up to her locks that had been trained to curl over her neck in beautiful and shining rings. The curls were gone. She looked at the face that had ever been an object of terror to her, and her little heart grew cold. But the teachings of the twenty months that had rolled so swiftly past had not been without their benefit. She had overcome, in some degree, the fear of the supernatural, and this trial was needed to strengthen in her the habit of self-dependence that had but now begun to spring up in her hitherto helpless nature. In the few



moments that she stood there, she grew rapidly older. Why she had been thus ruthlessly snatched from all the endearments of her beloved home, she could not fathom; but that she had not been carried to the thick woods or the lonely hills, was a matter of gratitude. That she was in the city she knew; for at the end of the country road, Mother Kurstegan had lifted her from the horse, saying, "now we are here, he may find his way home," and then they had walked warily, cautiously in the dark shadows of the streets, stealthily gained the lower part of the city next to the docks, and thence to this new, unusual home. A light was struck, eclipsing the soft, pale moon-rays, and Mother Kurstegan, placing it on a table, surveyed her shrinking victim with satisfaction.

"Do you know me, Chip?" at last she said.

"Yes," replied the child, endeavoring to return her glance with steadiness; "are you going to kill me?"

"No, little fool," returned the old woman, shuddering as she spoke; "but I'm going to keep you with me for a while, to learn you how to talk Delaware. I shan't let you move out, nor stir out, nor see the first living creature, except from these windows. If you'll be quiet, and won't give me any trouble, I won't harm you; but if you disobey me in *one* particular, I'll carry you off and give you to the Indians; now mind. You see how nicely I can manage," she added, with an insane laugh; "how cleverly I got you here, when, I suppose, not less than a dozen persons are on the search for you and me."

The child's face brightened; they might find her here before many days; she would try to have patience; to wait in peace as far as she could, and as she prepared to lie down in the little bed pointed out to her, weary and foot-sore as she was, it was a comfort to feel that those she loved were searching for her. Before she lay down, she knelt, as she had been taught, and audibly repeated her prayers, mingled with tears, for she missed the soft hand that had rested on her head, the tender good-night, the fervent kiss. The Indian woman, pretending not to look, was yet softened at the sight, and as she came to the words, "O Lord, wilt Thou bless all my dear friends who love me, my father, my mother, and Aunt Eunice; and wilt Thou bless all my enemies, if I have any, and those who do *not* love me; wilt Thou keep me from all danger this night, and help me to fear nothing but to do wrong," a look of terror crossed her face; she felt, for an instant, that there was a power beyond hers, resolute as was her will, inflexible as was her hatred.

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## CHAPTER XII

### SICK AND IN PRISON.

LE VAUGHN had altered his will, or rather made a new one, in favor of his daughter, if she should be found within ten years. For many



days after he had ceased to search for her, he continued in a state of depression that alarmed his friends; and Dr. Angell, who watched over his prostration, feared that insanity would ensue. His room was darkened; visitors were not admitted — only the faithful Martha ministered constantly at his bedside, and Nick, who possessed a spirit of uncommon tenderness, begged to sit near him, to hold his hand, to moisten his heated temples; but Le Vaughn seemed uneasy when the child was present. Martha said “It was natural, as the child wasn’t his own flesh and blood,” but she pitied the poor little fellow, who, dismissed from the room in the beginning of the illness, hung about the chamber door, asking frequently if he mightn’t come in only a minute, but Le Vaughn invariably shook his head, and the boy, dejected and unhappy, wandered about the house. One day Le Vaughn sent the faithful Martha on an errand. It was the seventh day of his sickness, and he sat in his bed propped up by pillows. A pale light came in through the one opened shutter, penetrated the blue curtains with which his bed was hung, and gave a ghastly expression to his high, massive brow and sunken eye. A rustling in the room attracted his attention, and he said,

“Did you find them, Martha?”

No answer was returned, but something sounded on his ear like a low sob. Astonished, he listened still more intently; yes, it was certainly a soft, suppressed noise as of some one weeping very quietly. He called again —

“Who’s there?” and bending forward, endeavored to part the curtains, that he might look into the room; no one was to be seen.

Martha now entered, and, observing marks of agitation on Le Vaughn’s face, she inquired the cause.

“It is nothing,” replied the sick man, thinking it to be a vagary of his own imagination — but at that moment the soft, sobbing sigh again broke through the stillness.

“Martha,” said Le Vaughn, starting, “am I dreaming, or is there somebody else in the room besides you and me?”

The face of the housekeeper turned red as scarlet and she bit her lips evidently undecided what to say. The sobbing now broke out beyond restraint, and Martha, with a deprecatory glance somewhere else exclaimed,

“I hope you’ll forgive me, sir, but indeed it made my heart ache to see the child. He wouldn’t scarcely eat, and as to play, he never thought of it.

“What do you mean, Martha?”

“Why, George Henry, sir; the little fellow, he’s jist set down here at the foot of the bed since last night, and there he slept, sir, on the floor, I fixing a pillar under his head. He asked that pitiful that I hadn’t the heart to deny him — and it’s him seeing you through the bottom of the curtain, so pale and sick, sir, as has made him cry and sob.”

Le Vaughn was touched, broken down at this. He remembered dimly seeing in the gray light of the morning, half dreaming, a



child's face at the foot of his bed, but he had been so overpowered by his first night's heavy sleep, that he fancied it a dream.

"Somebody loves me, then," he murmured — "come here, my little fellow. Martha, bring him here."

And the boy stood within the folds of the curtains, pale, with swift tears coursing rapidly down his cheeks, and convulsive sobs shaking his frame. Le Vaugn, overcome, felt his own eyes fill, and lifting up his arms, the boy's head sank upon his bosom, his faithful little heart beating close to the heart he loved. From that moment Nick stayed in the chamber as much as he wished, and his boyish talk lightened the gloom that had shadowed the soul of his father. He read to him, prattled of by-gone days, caressed him, watched him when he slept, and in every way contributed, by his docility, tenderness, and vivacity, to chase despondency from the unbalanced mind, and restore its functions to comparative health.

All this time Chip was a close prisoner. The Indian had endeavored, with every art she could master, to disguise her in appearance and in dress, but as time unfolded the sweetness of the child's disposition, and as no effort could conceal the spiritual beauty of her face, the rancor in the bosom of the misguided woman turned to affection, and, strange to say, her mania took another form, that demonstrated itself in evidences of the most lavish endearments. If the child did not instantly meet her on the threshold when she unlocked the door, she would walk the floor in ungovernable anguish. Often in the dead of night would Chip awaken to behold the strange being kneeling by her side, her hands spread over her head, muttering in some unknown language. At first it frightened the poor little thing, but as she felt instantly the kiss of peace, and heard words of the wildest love, she put her hand quietly in that of the Indian, and went softly to sleep. Her ethereal and vague sensations had shaped themselves into other forms. She could not listen to the words of genius, with senses locked and heart throbbing wildly as her foster-mother read to her, taking a strange delight in her rapture, but she sat whole hours absorbed in her own dreamy and poetic fancies. She had been taught to write, and the Indian, as eager now to gratify her charge as she had been to annoy, insult, and terrify her before, supplied her with paper and pens and ink, and when her intellect was controllable, she instructed her with patience and dignity. Mother Kurstegan, wrecked as she was in mind and body, still possessed much of her original vigor of brain and her cultivated mental power. From the age of fourteen to twenty-three she had received instructions in the best schools of England. A pet, a prodigy, everybody felt an interest in her progress — and no doubt her vanity had been stimulated, and her pride ungovernably roused by injudicious flattery. In company with her husband, in the first happy years of their wedded life, she had traveled the continent over, and visited all the places of mark. With reminiscences of these travels she had regaled the child, who learned to watch for her footsteps, and to read in her face whether the mind walked in light or darkness. Left much to herself, Chip learned to depend upon her own resources. In the long summer



evenings the old woman taught her to embroider with beads, and to make many curious ornaments of Indian craft. The walls, white and bare, were covered with sketches in charcoal, which the child gathered from the burnt embers after their meals were over. Sometimes Mother Kurstegan would draw an Indian warrior, with club outstretched and feathery crown, and sometimes the child, gathering her subjects from the beautiful prospect of cloud, sky, and river, would delineate them with rare skill. The little girl had become accustomed to her home. She thought of the past, she loved to speak of Park Dinsmore, and wonder if he missed his "little bird." She could talk freely of him to the old Indian, for Park had shown the latter a kindness at the old inn fireside that she had never forgotten.

The first of August came. The mellow light of a setting sun flooded the harbor, and streamed in through the coarse and tattered curtains that had been hung across the windows to keep out the hot daylight. But now the blinds were thrown back, the old curtains looped to one side by Chip's skillful fingers, the great room was clean, a gentle breeze rustled through, and Chip sat alone, a little back from the open window, nursing her beautiful thoughts, when a thundering knock at the door startled her. She sprang breathlessly to her feet, the blood receded from her face even to her lips; perhaps the doctor had found her; and with a regret and a great hope that mingled and shot through her heart like lightning, she stood uncertain what to do. Again the knock, louder, more impatient. There was no way of entering; Mother Kurstegan had the key, and she had promised, with solemn words, that terrified her to repeat, that she would never speak or betray her presence by a sign. Her resolution had almost given way, when a German voice shouted from below — the man at the door answered in German, and the person moved on knocking at another door. Chip sat down and cried, and so the Indian found her.

"What! some one came — and did you speak?" she said in accents of terror, her black eyes flashing fire.

"No, no, I was still," said the girl, shrinking back.

"Ah! but you thought some one had come for you; you hoped they would break in the door, tear down the house and carry you away; I know you did."

Chip was silent; she had hoped they would break down the door, but not tear down the house.

"And that after I have brought you these," exclaimed the excited woman, pointing to a bundle, "books, beautiful books, and a box full of colors and brushes, and pictures, and plenty of fine paper, that I risked my very life to buy, and that cost me all I have earned — oh!" she cried, turning away with anguished face, "how can I love her so, and she his child?"

"I am very sorry," said Chip, her face brightening at the enumeration of so many things she had longed for, "I — I don't think — if — if I could see Park sometimes I should feel very bad."

"You would like to see him! poor child, it is a pity if he should die of the fever, that you couldn't see him just once; what are you sobbing for, what are you trembling for?"



"Park is sick with the fever and going to die," cried the child with unaccountable anguish; "you said so."

"No, he isn't sick silly one — be silent; he's not sick; he's well, in his own mother's home; and hark, sometime I'll carry you there. Now be quiet and look at these beautiful things. Are you very sure that if you saw Park you would be happy here?"

"Oh! yes, yes, I know I should," exclaimed Chip.

"Well I'll see, perhaps he'll come on an eagle sometime, and spring into the window." The child jumped; her vivid imagination had seized on the picture, and she turned to the window as if to catch a glimpse of the outstretched wings, or the handsome face of her friend. The Indian laughed her wild laugh, and for some moments, sitting down on the floor, locking her arms about her knees, her mind wandered. By and by she sprang up, went toward Chip, and encircling her with both arms, she said with earnestness, "You're a pretty creature!" Chip flushed, and she stood quiet hardly knowing how to receive the admiration of her Indian captor. "Your curls have grown since then," resumed the Indian, pulling at the short wings that had changed from golden to brown; "take off the cap." Very gladly Chip untied the dark cotton covering which she had worn daily, and let fall the thick, soft tresses on her cheeks.

"I couldn't mar your beauty, sweet child, ever since I heard you pray that first night. I meant to cut your hair off close; I meant to scar you," she added, shuddering as she spoke, "with the tattoo mark — but I couldn't," and she added, solemnly, "there is a higher power than mine. It's been no will of mine that spared you."

Chip still gazed at her vaguely.

"You don't like these clothes, do you?" continued the woman, pointing to the half-jacket, half-basque that hung loosely on the upper part of the child's body, and the Indian leggins, rudely made, and Indian moccasins under them.

Chip shook her head. The woman mused a moment, her features grew softer, and a human tenderness moistened her eyes with tears. "I will," she muttered, then added, aloud, "I'll get you some better clothes, and you shall go with me and see Park. Le Vaugn is sick on his bed, the doctor's wife out of town, and nobody would know me in these clothes:—she *shall* see him, though I must get his promise first. Come, we'll have some supper."

Since Chip's abduction, the old woman had dressed in deep mourning, with a thick veil over her face. The dress she had purchased of a traveling Jew, and none would suspect the straight, dark woman, in her plaited cap and deep black bonnet, to be the abductor whose name had been for years a terror in the city. The humble meal was spread — the supper eaten, and the remains cleared away. As twilight came on, the atmosphere grew more oppressive.

"There'll be a good many cases to-night," remarked the Indian, standing by the window; "how this hot blast will take them off. And if the fools would eat spruce, or drink beer, they could save themselves. Well, when Doctor Rush, and Doctor Angell, and the



rest of the great physicians get sick, I guess I'll go to doctoring Ha ! I might make money ; I wonder if Le Vaughn's got the fever ? ”

She looked down ; Chip's eyes were fastened on her face.

“ What fever ? ” she asked.

“ Oh, you don't know any thing about it ; look at the flies over the river — what swarms ! clouds like gray smoke — a bad sign, go away from the window, child ; this air is poison for you ! ”

“ Shall I light a candle ? ” asked the little girl, moving toward the hearth.

“ Yes, yes — what clouds ! ” she added, to herself ‘ filled with thunder, and no signs of rain ! Faugh ! how the river smells ! The pools, too, the water at the wharf, covered with thick green scum ; anybody might know a fever would come. What ! you've got them out ! pretty things ! shall I show you how the Indians paint ? ’

“ Yes, ” replied Chip, with some of her old tremor, and Mother Kurstegan patched her face with brown and red and white, and laughed hideously. Chip stepped backward with a little fear, and the Indian sprang after her, but desisted as, with a scream of real terror, the child flung up her hands.

“ It's nothing, child ; here, I'll wipe it all off ; there, now ; take your paper and your brushes and make a pretty picture. ”

“ I don't feel like it, ” said Chip, sadly ; “ my head aches. ”

“ What ! ” cried the Indian, catching hold of the child's hands, which had grown hot, “ have I frightened you so ? Poor little Chip ! poor little darling ! there, ” and holding her close to her breast, she asked, “ does your head ache now ? ”

“ Yes, dreadfully, ” replied Chip, with a tearful, mournful manner.

“ No, it don't — no, no ; I tell you it *don't* ache ; now, see here ; your head is as cool as a plantain leaf ; look at me ; you haven't the least sign of a headache — it's imagination. ”

Chip shook her head.

“ It aches everywhere, ” she said, with emphasis.

The Indian, with changed manner, sat back and looked at the child. “ Then it's all over, ” she murmured ; “ she'll die and leave me, just because I care for her ; if I hated her she'd live forever. ”

“ When will you take me to Park ? ” asked Chip, eagerly, and she lifted her eyes, heavy and red, as she very faintly added, “ will you take me there to-morrow ? ”

“ Yes, yes, if I don't take you to your grave instead, ” muttered the Indian to herself ; and drawing Chip to her side, she felt her pulse, laid her hand over her forehead, and springing up she muttered : “ I must get water and heat it. ”

Taking a large tin pail in one hand, and throwing a shawl over her head with the other, she went out, locking the door after her ; and Chip sank down upon her little bed, groaning with pain. Presently the Indian came back, kindled a fire, and putting a small quantity of water on to boil, busied herself among her herb-bags. Finding the one she wanted, which contained dried spruce leaves and twigs, she threw a handful into the water, and watched it as it boiled.



"Water!" cried Chip, rousing herself; "oh, if I could only Park! May I, to-morrow?"

"Yes, yes," replied the Indian, holding the dipper to her lips.

"And my mother and my father?"

"Yes, yes, if you don't meet 'em in heaven."

"Oh, how I should like to go! If I could only be a bird and fly there!" she murmured, drowsily.

"Oh, it's coming the worst way!" cried the Indian, stooping above her, and noting the purple flush on her eyes, and the darkening color of her lips; "she mustn't sleep!" and hastening back to the fire, she took off the preparation, poured it into an earthen bowl, and carried it to the bedside. Its strong odor filled the room, and the Indian, wakening the child, coaxed and scolded until she drank the whole, and sank back quietly upon her bed. That night, long after the midhours were gone, an anxious watcher sat in the great, lonely room. The candle flared on the mantel, making grotesque the pencillings of the fair little hand along the walls. The box of bright colors lay open on the little table; sheets of paper, fallen on the floor, were scattered about in confusion, and now, drooping her head in momentary forgetfulness, anon listening to Chip's hurried breathing, and watching the red spot of fever deepen or fade on her cheeks, the Indian woman kept her faithful vigil. Chip looked radiant as an angel in the dim light. Her brow, her neck, her hands assumed a transparent whiteness, and her hair lay tossed in short bright waves on the dingy coverlet. Without, all was silent, but lights flitted along the streets from window to window; in almost every house there was a light; and the hot, stifling, murky atmosphere fell down over the whole city like a pall.

## CHAPTER XIII

### RECONCILIATION.

"WHERE shall I go to-day, doctor?" asked the Quaker's forewoman of Doctor Angell, as she met him at the door of his office.

"Congratulate me," he said softly, folding a letter as he stood on the threshold, and his smile wore no longer its haggard look, though he was reduced to a mere shadow — "congratulate me, my wife has borne me a son. Thank God! I am again a father," and he drew his handkerchief once across his eyes; then recollecting that she had spoken — "go?" he asked absently, looking up and down the hot, dusty, grass-grown street — "why! poor Le Vaughn is down, with no one to take care of him but my sick servant John. Ah! 'tis a fearful sight, this fever-haunted city; hardly enough living to bury the dead."

"Is there no other place?" asked Leoline, shrinking and trembling — "no sick women or children?"



"Yes, plenty, but they all of them have some little help, whereas poor Le Vaughn, and Van Alstyne —"

"Van Alstyne!" exclaimed the Quaker's forewoman, a look of consternation spreading over her face — her cheek crimsoning, her hands pressed hard against her heart — "did you say Mr. Van Alstyne had the fever?" she asked in a low, choking voice.

"Yes," replied Doctor Angell, too much engrossed with his own thoughts to heed her agitation — "we will walk along," he added, "or I shall be besieged with misery — yes, Le Vaughn and Van Alstyne are both sick in the same house. Van Alstyne's landlady died last week, since which time the professor has made his home at Le Vaughn's. If either of them die, it will be a great loss to the community, and I have little hope," he sighed as he spoke, looking thoughtfully, longingly toward the sky. The leaves were shriveled, and fell as the doctor and his friend walked underneath the rows of mournful trees, and their feet ground them to powder; there seemed no shadow over any thing — houses, streets — sky, all glaring — bright with a fierce metallic brightness. They moved hurriedly along, past block after block, deserted, ghostly in their isolation from life; past street after street, mighty mausoleums of silence with the mold of the plague gathered upon them. The dead cart rattled by; the sound of its wheels smote upon the heart — so rapid, so business-like it was — jolt, jolt, rumble, rumble, now a laugh from the hardened official who held the reins — now a startling silence, broken by that shout that has fallen upon but few living ears. "bring out your dead."

Leoline held her emotions in subservience to her powerful will as much as her strength would permit — and yet, oh! what a deadly faintness crept over her very soul as she thought of Van Alstyne, sick, suffering — perhaps dying. Even Le Vaughn's illness struck the chords of her sympathy, and awakened a thrill of pity. She knew of Nick's safety — she thought of him with all the love a mother can feel who has never known what it was to press a babe to her bosom, and she *had* known — ay! drank to the dregs the cup of desertion and deception — whose mingled bitterness had nearly changed her nature, and destroyed her reason.

"At this house, a woman and three children are ill," said the doctor, pausing before a small frame tenement — "what! you will go on — I am glad of it; for there is a good old black woman here — but the others are destitute." Nothing more was spoken till they reached Le Vaughn's house. The front door stood open — there were marks of disorder in the hall — a noise as of some one wrestling in the parlor — and there indeed was Le Vaughn with his wife's portrait in one hand, battling with the black man and threatening to kill him if he did not leave the house.

At sight of Leoline, though he did not know her, his frenzy was calmed, and he submitted, reeling and staggering like a drunken man, to be carried up-stairs, where he sat on the side of his bed, but could not be compelled to lie down. What a sight here met the gaze! The splendid mirrors were dashed to atoms, the furniture



broken and defaced in every conceivable manner — the windows held but the sharp and jagged fragments of glass, and the most dire confusion prevailed.

"It is not often that the fever takes this turn," whispered Doctor Angell to Leoline, who stood aghast in the midst of the destruction, "it would not be safe to leave you here."

"Van Alstyne," murmured Leoline — and this time the passion that ran through her voice and trembled in the clasp of her hand did not escape the doctor. He dared not move from Le Vaughn, so he beckoned his servant who stood out of the sick man's sight, to show her the way, while he prepared an anodyne for his patient. He led her to the next chamber, having locked the door between the two rooms, for the greater safety of Van Alstyne, and she stood beside the heavily curtained bed.

"He's jest the oder way," whispered the black, who yet panted from the effect of Le Vaughn's crazy violence; "but I tinks much more worse;" and he pushed aside the curtain.

"Oh, how white! how deathly pale!" murmured Leoline, gazing with an anguished look, "are you sure he lives?"

The black touched the pale hand lying apparently lifeless on the snowy bed-spread; a slight movement showed that there was yet life. Leoline knelt and touched the still hand with her lips, murmuring, as the hot tears filled her eyes:

"I may love you surely, now — and you so near God."

"Is taere any hope? oh, Doctor Angell! this — these scenes — they — are too frightful!" and her woman's heart gave way — she sank back with a heavy sob, and the tears fell like rain over her face.

"I told you they would be too much for you, my dear friend," said the doctor, gently; "you had better not stay; both of these cases are hopeless — this one especially so. Poor Van Alstyne! he is in the stupor that precedes death — he must die!"

With one wild shriek Leoline fell on her knees at the doctor's feet.

"Save him! save him!" she cried, with wild emphasis "look at me!" She tore off the cap and the band of gray hair, her own locks falling about her shoulders; "I am not old — you see me as I am in my woman's love and weakness, we love each other — *I can not give up! doctor, will you save him?*"

The doctor stood for a moment stupidly gazing down at the suppliant at his feet, so anguished, so beautiful! The transformation was startling and complete; then he looked toward the sick bed, saying as he pointed:

"*You have saved him — see!*"

The beaded sweat was standing in great drops on the forehead of the sick man — her voice had roused him even from that ominous stupor, and brought him to the threshold of consciousness once more.

"Disguise yourself quickly," said the doctor, bending instantly above Van Alstyne. "You are better my friend," he whispered low and softly; "take courage — you may soon be well again."

"Where is she?" feebly murmured Van Alstyne, and a faint smile hovered around his lips.



"Near you — watching you ; be hopeful the worst is over "

"Leoline," murmured the pale lips, fondly; "Leoline!"

"Give him these medicines," said Doctor Angell; "keep him quiet. I hope we may save him; one of these days we shall know whether we are ourselves or somebody else, shan't we?" he added, making a faint attempt at jocularly; but seeing the tears and the pallor of Leoline, he desisted, only adding; "You had better resume your Quaker garb — "

"Somebody down stairs wants to see you, doctor," said the black man, who had left the room at a loud summons below.

The doctor hurried down — Jake the new undertaker, stood just inside the hall, holding a thin, wan, ghastly, yet beautiful little girl by the hand, and making a dozen awkward obeisances. Catching the child in his arms, the doctor held her to his heart, exclaiming:

"Little Lena! why, my lost lamb, where have you been?"

The child lay sobbing on his shoulder, he turned an inquiring glance toward Jake.

"Why, it was one of the walking cases, you know — though it struck me all in a heap, and she dressed so respectable; I ain't seen Mother Kurstegan these two years — might be more — but thinks I, as I see a well-dressed, genteel-looking woman staggering along, that's a walking case; and sure enough, when I come to look in her face, it was her, Mother Kurstegan, the old Indian critter, and no mistake! Says I, 'You sick or bin drinkin'?' Says she, 'O God, be merciful!' kind a religious like, thinkin' of her latter end, may be. Says I, 'Old mother, you're taken with the fever.' Says she, 'Though your sins be scarlet-like, they shall be washed white as wool; Oh God, be merciful!' and then she dropt. I kinder raised her, and she told me where she lived — so I hailed one of the carts, you know, as it happened to be almost empty, and had her carried home. Well, there I found this child."

"Is the old woman dead?"

"Yes, and buried by this time," replied the teamster, with a stolid indifference.

"Poor Leoline!" murmured the doctor. "How came you to know where to bring my sweet lamb?"

"Why, bless you, don't everybody know about the stole child and whose it was?" responded Jake, thrusting his fingers through his red hair; "it's the very cave-child that she kept up in them hills in the country, I expect, poor critter! I took her home to Mast — that's my wife, sir — and gave her a reg'lar good breakfast."

"Thank you — thank you!" replied the doctor, offering him a gold-piece, for he evidently expected to be paid; and pressing the pale child to his bosom, he summoned Leoline.

"Found!" she cried; then clasping her hands, her cheeks ashy pale, she murmured faintly, "my mother!"

Doctor Angell was silent — Leoline sank upon the staircase, crying, with a wailing voice, "Dead — and I am not forgiven!"

"She called you," said Chip, in a low tone.



"And did she — say — did she curse me?" gasped Leoline, with a shudder, "did she speak of Leoline!"

"If you are Leoline, she said she loved you," replied the child, in the same plaintive voice, "and wanted you to forgive her."

"Angel!" cried Leoline, catching the child's hands in her own; "God only knows how you have lightened my heart, oh, let my mother have a Christian burial," she cried, turning, in an agony of tears, to the doctor: "she was honored before this great misfortune — let her have Christian burial!" she supplicated.

"I would if it were in my power," replied the physician, sadly "but in such a time as this, unless with my own patients, and only seldom then, I can not control the disposition of their bodies; your mother is at rest," he added, pained by Leoline's anguish; "it is past my allotted time for medical visits, much past; I would I could stop to comfort you; bear up, my friend — do not give me another fever patient. I must send this child out of the city — out of the reach of infection."

All this he said rapidly.

"No, no! let me stay — let me go with you," cried the little girl, grasping her hand; "I've had the fever; I was very sick — I almost died — let me stay — with *her*!" and she crept closer to Leoline.

"Very well," the doctor replied; "my man will remain till noon," he continued, to Leoline; and then turning quickly away, for her sorrowful face unmanned him; "I will be round by ten, certainly. I don't think Le Vaughn will live the day out; if he is calm after the powerful opiate I gave him has done its work, and alludes to his child, or if you think before I come back that it will be safe to inform him of her return, why, I leave it to your judgment. I must hasten; my horse is at the door;" and springing over the stairs, he hurried from the house.

At ten o'clock he returned again; Van Alstyne slept, but the pallor of death no longer overspread his face, though it was very white.

"Out of danger," he whispered to Leoline, who stood near, holding Chip by the hand.

Thus all the morning the poor child had clung to Leoline, and would not let her go; she seemed continually in a nervous dread, and was silent and desponding, save when Leoline's earnest voice fell upon her ear. She trembled if a door opened or shut, and clung closer whenever she neared a door, as if she feared some mysterious seizure. At intervals Leoline had talked with her about her poor mother; and the child's replies took much of the weight caused by the Indian's neglect of and antipathy toward her, from her spirit. And Leoline had told Chip that she was now in her own father's home had taken her below and shown her the portrait of her own mother who had died longing to clasp her lost and only child to her cold bosom. There Chip had knelt and gazed solemnly, and with lips quivering and tears starting, had kissed the silent canvas; and moved from thence, and wherever she went, as one in a strange dream, awe-struck, fearful — drawing long sighs, pressing closely against Leoline.

The doctor passed into Le Vaughn's room; the latter lay with open



eyes — he had just recovered from a fearful spasm; the most horrible and revolting features of the fever had marked his case — too horrible to be recorded, and he lay now, weak, helpless, his eyes almost starting from their sockets, and swimming in blood. He felt the pressure of the doctor's hand.

"Am I going?" he asked, feebly.

"You must die, Le Vaugn," said the doctor, solemnly. "Have you any directions to give? Shall I send for a minister — or shall I pray for you?"

The dying man was silent — a little tremor on the upper lip, the yellow teeth closing over it, and leaving their imprint in blood — a groan — and he said:

"I would commend my poor child to you, doctor, but she is dead — carried away in that frightful pest-cart."

His voice failed him, and great drops rolled down his sunken cheeks. The doctor, accustomed as he was to sights of misery, wept like a child, and then, in a broken voice, he said:

"Le Vaugn, my dear friend, you are dying, and what I have to say, may hasten your death; but if I can give you one momentary joy before you enter the eternal world — let me say, your daughter is living — is found — is here —" he caught the dying man who, in delirious joy, half sprung from his bed, and trembling in every limb, his features working spasmodically, could hardly articulate — "Quick — quick!"

"But lie quietly, or she must not see you — you shall speak to her, bless her. — But do not frighten the child. Come here, darling;" and taking the pale, shrinking creature within the curtain, he whispered, "smile, love — put your hand in his hand — say, Father." The child did all that was required with a wonderful composure. Le Vaugn began moaning like a little infant, and grieving and sobbing, though his exhausted frame would hardly bear the motion of anguish.

"Shall I pray for you, Le Vaugn?" asked the doctor.

"Let me die, let me die," was his only response.

"Do you feel prepared to enter the presence of your Maker?" continued the doctor.

"Let me die — let me die," he repeated, still moaning and sobbing and grieving. Notwithstanding, the doctor knelt down and offered a prayer, beseeching the Eternal to forgive the dying man for His Son's sake. When he rose all was still, and poor little Chip's hand lay within that of a corpse.

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It was near the dawn of another sultry day. Leoline, fatigued with watching, sat near a little table on which flickered a taper, almost burnt out. With one hand she shaded her weary eyes, and with the other grasped a book that had been her solace through the sad hours of the desolate night — the Bible. Chip lay near the door, on a little bed made up on the floor, sleeping soundly. A voice roused Leoline, who still retained her Quaker dress; it said — "It is



time; I must rise. She sprang to the bed, and whispered — “Not yet — not yet.”

“I’ve slept beyond my usual hour,” replied Van Alstyne. “Why!” he exclaimed, in a tone of the deepest consternation; “how is this? I can not move — I am chained; am I sleeping still?”

“You have been very sick, and it is weakness,” murmured Leoline, softly.

“Who are you?”

“I am Quaker John’s forewoman,” replied the soft voice, after a pause.

“Where am I?” he interrogated.

“In the house of Mr. Le Vangn.”

“Oh! I remember, Le Vangn was sick. wasn’t he? Has he got about yet?”

“He — has — gone — out,” replied Leoline; with feigned composure.

“I am glad; they need him very much at the office. Is the fever raging still in the city? — over in Philadelphia, you know, I mean —” he added, as if laboring under some confusion of intellect — “over in the city, in Philadelphia, I mean.”

“It is not yet quite subsided,” she answered, hearing, as she spoke, the dull rumble of the dead-carts that traversed the streets almost constantly.

“Has anybody been here to inquire after me?” he asked, a moment after. “Have any letters come? I ought not to be lying here; and yet, only think how weak I am!”

“Dr. Angell has been here frequently,” replied his watcher, falteringly; “and — and a lady whom you know — Miss Leoline —”

“Oh! has she! *has* she?” exclaimed Van Alstyne, breaking in upon her — a light shining from his pallid face; “then *she* has not had the fever!”

“No; and she is very anxious for your recovery,” added Leoline, in a trembling whisper.

“Is she? Well, that is so kind! so sweet in her. I thought she had forgotten me; I am glad I have been sick. God bless her,” he repeated, fervently, more than once. Leoline turned away, affected inexpressibly. “Did you say there were letters?” he asked, after a long pause.

“Yes; the doctor brought one from Germantown,” replied Leoline.

“Oh! that is from Park — my dear friend.” After a little silence, he murmured, “I wish I could hear it.”

“Shall I read it to you?” asked Leoline.

“Oh! if you please,” he said, smiling faintly; “but stop, it is not sealed with black?”

“No; the seal is a beautiful crimson,” said Leoline, breaking it, her heart swelling with love and joy.

“How much your voice reminds me —” murmured Van Alstyne, his words sunk into a whisper.

The gray shadows were melting into a soft, yet uncertain light, as



Leoline prepared to read. She trimmed another lamp, and changing her voice slightly, she commenced as follows.

“MY DEAR VAN ALSTYNE: No letter from you this week, and I am almost ill with apprehension. I have done every thing to divert my mind from the fears attendant upon your silence. Your letters are laid — or, in fact, any letters addressed to us (and melancholy few and drearily far between they come), under a large flat stone which I call friendship’s altar, about half a mile from here. There we keep a furnace of charcoal, a pot of vinegar, a tin full of tar, and the dickens knows what else; and our fumigating scenes are inexpressibly funny, for there never was such a scared old fellow as our butler. He takes a pair of the longest and oldest-fashioned tongs to be had in town (they belong to old Squire Hutchings), and he picks the letters up one by one, and hold them over the tar and over charcoal, till I get so impatient, I should like to hold him over them by the same means, and then dips the letters in vinegar, which come up all dripping, and in a very questionable state of decipheration. I have not accompanied him this morning, on purpose to write to you; six times I have ran to the window, even while writing these few lines, and yonder comes our old man, and — no letter from you. Alas, alas! what can the matter be? but I *will* not think you are sick — oh, Van Alstyne, why did you not come out here with us? Come now; fly to this sweet retreat. The autumn woods are beautiful, ripe peaches hang on our trees, and blushing apples; the beech-oaks and the walnuts stand in solid pyramid from the base to the point of our splendid hill, just opposite the house; the magnolias still blossom, their snow-like goblets brimming with beauty; oh, Van Alstyne, why are you not here? I could not sleep last night for thinking of you. I have a strange story to tell. One night last week — I think it was Monday — I was called out from the sitting-room. A woman in black met me in the garden. I was fearful of infection, but when she lifted her veil, displaying the features of Mother Kurstegan I forgot all peril. Of course, my first question was of Lena.”

The voice of the reader failed — but with a strong effort she conquered her emotion, and continued:

“‘I have brought her here, and you shall see her on two conditions,’ she said. ‘First, you are to ask no questions — second, you are not to detain her a moment beyond my pleasure; if you do, so sure will I bring the plague upon you.’ Her eyes burned redly; her face (it must have been handsome once) was full of fire; I did feel a momentary dread of the woman, but my heart was yearning to see my little darling, and I promised. She was gone for full five minutes she brought Lena, but oh, Van Alstyne, what a change! Mournful, pale, trembling, her great eyes swimming in tears she seemed afraid to let fall.”

“Don’t read if it troubles you,” murmured the weak voice behind the curtains.

He did not see the struggles for composure the heaving chest, the



blinded eyes, the quivering fingers; did not hear the long-drawn, yet silent sigh.

"Her locks shortened, her arms white and thin," resumed Leoline, gathering the letter closer to the light, "Van Alstyne, my heart choked me; I held her to my bosom, and thought I would fly with her to my mother, but the remembrance of my promise restrained me. Van Alstyne, when I think of the suffering of that dear child, I want to live; I want her to live, that she may yet know the delights of a happy home. It was like tearing soul and body apart to give her up, but she seemed to have been schooled into submission; and, dear one, she seemed so happy only to have seen me. But, Van Alstyne, as the Indian turned to go, she made this remark: 'The eagle had pity on the bird, and learned to love the bird; the eagle may be torn in pieces, but the bird will live, and go back to its golden cage, and sing all its life.' Was not this strange? I hope the Indian has not returned to that frightful city with my darling — may God spare her life!"

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"Bring out your dead!"

The hoarse cry sounded above Leoline's voice. She paused; there came a tread of shuffling feet, of smothered whispers in the next room; a brushing past the closed door; muffled foot-steps down the stairs; a low, coarse laugh; the closing of the street-door; a heavy rumbling of wheels; and there was silence she dared not break. The pest-cart had borne away the corpse of Le Vaugn.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### RECOMPENSE.

The plague was over. On the 15th of October there was a heavy rain, the clouds burst asunder, and the hot, panting, fever-stricken city arose out of its calamity, and put on fresh garments. From that day the sickness diminished, the cooling winds swept the close air of death from the grass-grown streets, and a new vitality arose from the ashes of destruction. First might be seen one or two shops opened in some deserted quarter of the city; occasionally a cart was driven from street to street; a solitary hammer smote the silence; one house after another gave signs of occupation; presently more stores were opened; carriages deposited their inmates at the hotels; boats rowed about the river; vessels spread their white sails; and before many weeks the streets were thronged, the carriages driving, the places of amusement filled, and the hum and stir of business and domestic life made music where the awful silence of the plague had ruled. Doctor Angell had taken the fever, and had narrowly escaped with his life. To Mrs. Angell the season had been one of terror, though God had sent a baby to her heart; but this, absorbing gift as it was,



did not prevent her mind from dwelling on the perils to which her husband, by his noble devotion to humanity, exposed his life daily. But when she received him as from the mouth of the grave, leaned once more upon his bosom, and felt the blessed thrill of his fervent kiss, the anguish of the past was all forgotten. And Chip! how she welcomed her! How she thanked God, with tears and fervency, that the peculiar suffering to which she had been exposed was forever past! Chip lay sobbing and laughing within the arms that so tenderly supported her; her haven was reached — a sacred home! There were the books she loved — the beautiful poets who had stirred her nature, till rapture turned to pain; there was the new pianoforte the doctor had bought especially for her. There was her own table, with its many drawers, in which her colors, her own choice stock of stationery, her pretty silver-headed pencils, her store of exquisite engravings, all lay as if she had put them back but yesterday, and after a night's refreshing sleep had returned to them again; and then wonder of wonders! there was in the cradle the greatest gift and blessing of all — a miracle of infantile grace and loveliness — a babe who should be hers to fondle and caress. Chip's cup of joy was full. The day was a thousand times brighter because the night had been so dark and stormful, and like a young eagle that has learned to rest upon its own outspread pinions, her soul soared exultingly in this home atmosphere.

Park Dinsmore fluttered between Germantown and Quaker John's homestead, spending alternate days in each: Martha and Nick were again established in their wonted dwelling, for Le Vaugn had provided nobly for his faithful domestic, and made arrangements for her still to occupy the home she had loved so long, till the boy Nick should grow to manhood. The whole estate, bank funds, and shares, stock, and interest in the paper, went into the hands of Van Alstyne, who was appointed in trust for the two children, and to whom a liberal salary was secured, thus placing him far above want.

One bright morning, early in the ensuing spring, a carriage drove up to the door of Quaker John; a rustle of heavy silks sounded in the hall. Leoline had returned from a long visit at Mrs. Dinsmore's; she still wore her disguise, but the gray hair, the somber, frilled cap, and the patches upon her cheeks, could not conceal the joy that illuminated her whole face.

The Quaker had invited "a company" to his house that day, including Martha and her charge, Doctor Angell and his wife, with Chip. The doctor came, bringing the sweet little girl, who, freed from apprehension, had grown bloomingly beautiful. Van Alstyne was there, still pale, for some hidden sorrow weighed down his heart, and now and then the Quaker's forewoman appeared for a few moments, but seemed to be busily engaged. In quiet converse the hours wore away.

"Will you walk out?" asked Park Dinsmore of Van Alstyne.

"With pleasure," and they passed from the house together.

"I am so glad you have got the professorship in Yale," said Park after a short silence; "but you seem to be noways elated."



"I am happy at the prospect of still being with you," replied Van Alstyne, smiling a little sadly; "but, to tell the truth, no news gives me much joy."

"Van Alstyne, what makes you so gloomy?" inquired Park, taking his friend's arm. "Is it the loss of poor Le Vaughn, or any dear friend? is it your ill-health? It grieves me to see you so."

Van Alstyne did not answer; they were just turning the corner where stood the old Hantz house.

"See; the door is open," said Park, touching it with his finger; "let's go in, nobody lives here now."

Van Alstyne gladly acceded. A secret longing to enter and look in silence and loneliness upon the walls within which he had spent the golden hours of his life, had more than once possessed him. For Leoline's strange silence he could not account; since his sickness she had been invisible, and even Quaker John, when appealed to, waived the subject and bade him wait, so he had waited till patience was gone, and the gloom of doubt had made him at last, desponding and unhappy. They had ascended the stairs — gained the room to which Van Alstyne led the way, when a low murmur arrested the attention of both. The manner in which the open door stood, enabled them to see the Quaker's forewoman upon her knees, one arm about the boy Nick, talking fondly and earnestly to him, while he, with red cheeks and a boyish bashfulness, gazed in her face. The voice was low — the words were undistinguishable, but they seemed to leap from a passionate and long-smothered love. She pressed back his locks, and gently kissed him on the forehead — then, as if she could no longer restrain her feelings, caught him to her bosom, and rained kisses upon his brow, cheek, and lips, before he could disengage himself from her embrace. Suddenly starting at sounds of a footstep, she sprang to her feet, and with a voice of alarm, "Who is there?"

Park retreated, but Van Alstyne, whispering, "We will not seem to be listeners," advanced, saying, "I beg your pardon, madam, we came up to look over the old house, never for a moment imagining we should find it occupied."

The woman had grown pale; she calmly accepted his apology, and still was silent.

"Pardon me, madam," Van Alstyne said, again approaching her with much agitation; "will you not give me some information concerning the lady who formerly occupied these rooms? I promise you, on the honor of a gentleman, I will not abuse your confidence; it is of great importance that I should see her before I leave the city — perhaps never to return."

"You shall see her," murmured Leoline, turning to go in the little room adjoining, and shutting the door.

Van Alstyne grew white.

"What does it mean?" whispered Park. "If it *should* be?" and he started as the thought broke upon him; "amazement! what if the Quaker's forewoman should be Leoline, after all?"

The door opened again, and it was Leoline's self who entered, pale, sweetly beautiful, garbed in black, and advancing toward Van Alstyne



said : " No longer the Quaker's forewoman, but simply Leoline, now and forever."

Van Alstyne clasped her outstretched hand in both of his, but his great emotion would not let him speak.

Park stood by, bashful, yet smiling, as many past occurrences, meetings, and gatherings rushed through his mind. At last Van Alstyne broke the silence, exclaiming :

" Can it be possible? *Can* transformation be so complete. Leoline, you astonish me. I am bewildered beyond expression. I believe it impossible —"

" For women to keep secrets?" suggested Park, reproachfully.

" No — I did not mean — I was not going to say that; but then the skill! the admirable self-possession — I am just astounded — but so happy! so very happy."

" Perhaps," said Leoline, checking his rapture, " we had all better return to the house; it is chilly here. Come," and she held out her hand to Nick, who, apparently fascinated with the beautiful woman, put his hand confidently within her clasp.

" I am his guardian," whispered Van Alstyne, impulsively (Park had hurried on before them); then noting the flush and extreme emotion of his new-found love, he added : " Dearest, you are as holy in my eyes as an angel. Forget the past — I could not live without you — I should have died, Leoline."

She gave him one grateful look; tears were in her eyes, tears of rapture, of perfect happiness. She had found rest. She had tried him — his patience — his truth — his nobleness — and he was great in all. This atoned for the cloud that had ever rested on her life. She entered the parlor, modestly clinging to Van Alstyne's arm.

" I see — it's all right," said the doctor.

" Well she is a splendid woman!" said Park; " and now, Van Alstyne, you'll be married, and settle down; and I'm going to college, to stay four years — then shall return — marry Lena — she'll be sixteen, and we're engaged," he added, demurely; " sure as you live," he continued, seeing a smile on the face of the professor; " Lena's little, but she knows enough to love me."

We look into the handsome cottage on the outskirts of the city, to take a last glance at Masty's honest features, as she sits in her own "boughten" home; and we see the homely inn, where the wife and baby of bald-headed Job are still crying in concert — and catch a glimpse of the redoubtable Snackskin, hanging out her clothes, as she shouts in shrill treble :

" I ain't got nothin' to do — no, nothin' in the world."



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said : " No longer the Quaker's forewoman, but simply Leoline, now and forever."

Van Alstyne clasped her outstretched hand in both of his, but his great emotion would not let him speak.

Park stood by, bashful, yet smiling, as many past occurrences, meetings, and gatherings rushed through his mind. At last Van Alstyne broke the silence, exclaiming :

" Can it be possible? *Can* transformation be so complete? Leoline, you astonish me. I am bewildered beyond expression. I believe it impossible —"

" For women to keep secrets?" suggested Park, reproachfully.

" No — I did not mean — I was not going to say that; but then the skill! the admirable self-possession — I am just astounded — but so happy! so very happy."

" Perhaps," said Leoline, checking his rapture, " we had all better return to the house; it is chilly here. Come," and she held out her hand to Nick, who, apparently fascinated with the beautiful woman, put his hand confidently within her clasp.

" I am his guardian," whispered Van Alstyne, impulsively (Park had hurried on before them); then noting the flush and extreme emotion of his new-found love, he added : " Dearest, you are as holy in my eyes as an angel. Forget the past — I could not live without you — I should have died, Leoline."

She gave him one grateful look; tears were in her eyes, tears of rapture, of perfect happiness. She had found rest. She had tried him — his patience — his truth — his nobleness — and he was great in all. This atoned for the cloud that had ever rested on her life. She entered the parlor, modestly clinging to Van Alstyne's arm.

" I see — it's all right," said the doctor.

" Well she is a splendid woman!" said Park; " and now, Van Alstyne, you'll be married, and settle down; and I'm going to college, to stay four years — then shall return — marry Lena — she'll be sixteen, and we're engaged," he added, demurely; " sure as you live," he continued, seeing a smile on the face of the professor; " Lena's little, but she knows enough to love me."

We look into the handsome cottage on the outskirts of the city, to take a last glance at Mast's honest features, as she sits in her own "boughten" home; and we see the homely inn, where the wife and baby of bald-headed Job are still crying in concert — and catch a glimpse of the redoubtable Snackskin, hanging out her clothes, as she shouts in shrill treble :

" I ain't got nothin' to do — no, nothin' in the world."



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